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Research jointly supported by the ESRC and DFID

## Poverty Alleviation in the Wake of Typhoon Yolanda<sup>1</sup>, Fieldwork: Working Paper II

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### Introduction

On 8 November 2013 super-typhoon Yolanda<sup>2</sup> hit the Visayas region of the Philippines. Official figures show that 6,293 individuals were reported dead, 1,061 went missing and 28,689 were injured. A vast area of agricultural land was devastated and whole towns were destroyed. The typhoon affected 591 municipalities and the total damage is estimated at US\$904,680,000<sup>3</sup>. The total number of people affected by this disaster in terms of their livelihood, environmental and food security was approximately 16 million.

The overarching aim of our project is to identify the strategies that work in relation to poverty alleviation in post-disaster urban environments and the conditions necessary for the success and scaling up of these strategies. The typhoon Yolanda relief efforts in the Philippines are used as a case study. The project focuses on urban population risk, vulnerability to disasters and resilience towards environmental shocks. We aim to measure resilience over time and test the extent to which the notion of 'Building Back Better' is credible.

Disasters can swiftly derail development planning and poverty alleviation strategies and those living in densely packed informal urban settlements are amongst those most at risk of poverty. These communities are amongst the most at risk and yet least able to resurrect themselves after disasters. Drawing on extensive fieldwork in the region we will assess people's experience of disaster relief and rehabilitation initiatives and

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<sup>1</sup> This research is funded by an ESRC/DFID Joint Fund Poverty Alleviation grant (ES/M008932/1, £347,000.00). Dr. Pauline Eadie (University of Nottingham, Pauline.Eadie@nottingham.ac.uk) is Principle Investigator and Dr. May Tan-Mullins (University of Nottingham, Ningbo, May.Tan-Mullins@nottingham.edu.cn) and Dr. Maria Ela Atienza (University of the Philippines Diliman, ela.atienza@gmail.com) are Co-Investigators.

<sup>2</sup> Eadie, Pauline (2013) 'Typhoon in Philippines Reveals Underlying Political Failings', *Ballots and Bullets*, 12 November. Available at: <http://nottspolitics.org/2013/11/12/typhoon-in-philippines-reveals-underlyingpolitical-failings/>. Accessed 5 June 2016.

<sup>3</sup> National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, Republic of the Philippines, SitRep No. 108 Effects of Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan), 3 April 2014. Available at: [http://www.ndrrmc.gov.ph/attachments/article/1329/Effects\\_of\\_Typhoon\\_YOLANDA\\_\(HAIYAN\)\\_SitRep\\_No\\_108\\_03APR2014.pdf](http://www.ndrrmc.gov.ph/attachments/article/1329/Effects_of_Typhoon_YOLANDA_(HAIYAN)_SitRep_No_108_03APR2014.pdf). Accessed 5 June 2016.

make policy recommendations on how sustained routes out of poverty can be developed in ways that can be replicated and scaled up. The key themes of the project are vulnerability, risk, resilience and shocks in relation to paths in and out of poverty. Vulnerability and risk inform why and how poor people are exposed to natural disasters whilst resilience informs how they coped and how coping strategies can be supported and risk lessened. Post-disaster environments, by their very nature, can be urgent and uncoordinated. In the immediate aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda the disaster struck region became the focus of a significant international relief effort. However the rebuilding of sustainable communities in the longer term is an ongoing concern.

The following paper incorporates observations made by the authors<sup>4</sup> during fieldwork in Tacloban, Palo and Tanauan over a number of months in July/August 2014, late 2015 and early 2016. This paper addresses the logistical issues of conducting fieldwork as opposed to actual findings. We hope that an explanation of our experiences in the field will help other researchers to plan their budgets, configure appropriate research teams and consider issues that could distort the data that they gather. Our fieldwork is still in progress and these observations are preliminary.

This paper will start with an outline of the area under research and the rationale for our overall research design. We outline issues that we encountered when organizing the workload of our team and budget. We also address the protocols that we found relevant when researching in specific areas and the extent to which the identity of the researcher can distort the data gathered and the willingness of respondents to be interviewed. We will also address the extent to which a culture of aid dependency can distort data gathering. There is a danger that impoverished and/or disaster struck respondents can exaggerate their plight if they think that the researchers have influence over the allocation of aid. This phenomenon is likely to be heightened in post disaster environments, as communities will be used to the distribution of aid. It is significant that many of the focus groups and interviews that we conducted took place at a time when many aid agencies were pulling out or had already left. This paper will give a preliminary assessment of the danger of aid dependency. We also address how 'clientelist' relations in the Philippines can transfer itself from local political 'patrons' to international aid agencies. This can potentially have a detrimental impact on community resilience and also distort the data that researchers and aid agencies gather. The paper will offer practical advice on the strategy and design of post-disaster research.

## **Research Design and the Area Under Research**

Governance in the Philippines is devolved, under the 1991 Local Government Code<sup>5</sup>, to e.g. provinces and cities/municipalities, otherwise known as Local Government Units (LGUs). LGUs are further sub-divided into barangays that are the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines run by elected officials. LGUs are expected to be at the frontline of disaster planning and disaster rehabilitation as outlined in

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<sup>4</sup> We would also like to acknowledge the fieldwork support and observations of Claire L. Berja, Jan Robert Go and Ladylyn Brazas Lim.

<sup>5</sup> The Local Government Code of the Philippines (1991) Available at: <http://www.chanrobles.com/localgovfulltext.html#.V1QuLLR7DTQ>. Accessed 5 June 2016.

Section 15 of Republic Act No. 10121<sup>6</sup>. However, if more than one city is affected by a disaster the primary responsibility for coordinating the response to and recovery from a disaster moves up to the provincial level. If the scale of the disaster is even wider, then primary responsibility moves to the regional or national level. The scale of Typhoon Yolanda dictated that primary responsibility for response and recovery lay at the national level. However, the performance of selected LGUs and barangays can be tracked over time and against each other over space to investigate which units performed more effectively and why. Over time our project compares poverty alleviation strategies in the immediate (reactive), medium (proactive) and longer (sustainable) term. Over the time frame of our project reactive strategies are already identifiable. Pro-active strategies will continue to be assessed over the duration of the project.

Our research focuses on 20 barangays of comparable size across three adjacent coastal LGUs, Tacloban, Palo and Tanauan. All three LGUs suffered a similar degree of devastation as a result of Typhoon Yolanda. Eight barangays within Tacloban, six barangays within Palo and six within Tanauan are assessed. The barangays chosen were; Tacloban<sup>7</sup>: 54, 54-A, 66-A, 67, 87, 88, 89 and Abucay (least affected); Palo<sup>8</sup>: Cavite, Cogon, Libertad (least affected), Pawing, Salvacion and San Joaquin; Tanauan<sup>9</sup>: Bislig, Calogcog, Salvador (least affected), San Roque, Sta. Cruz and Sto. Nino. All the barangays chosen, apart from the least affected, are coastal and were directly affected by the storm surge that came with Yolanda<sup>10</sup>. The uneven sample size across the LGUs relates to the differing size, and hence number of barangays, of each LGU.

Tacloban, Palo and Tanauan are relatively safe working environments and it is relatively easy to navigate the area. This meant that when interview arrangements changed it was fairly easy to get from one location to another quickly. Public transport is also frequent, cheap and reliable. However we are aware that there are limitations to working in areas that are easy to access. Other, more remote, areas face particular challenges because of their location. It is tempting for relief workers and researchers working on disaster relief to focus on areas with ease of access as logistics dictate that results will be seen more quickly. In our case we were often asked if we were researching the neighbouring island of Samar that had also been badly hit by the

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<sup>6</sup> Republic of the Philippines (2010) *Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010*. Available at: <http://www.gov.ph/2010/05/27/republic-act-no-10121/>. Accessed 5 June 2016.

<sup>7</sup> MA525 – Philippines Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) Tacloban City Affected Barangays (as of 23-Nov-2013). Available at: <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=20fa2952d9984699b4f95da669ddeefe>. Accessed 5 June 2016.

<sup>8</sup> View Map of Palo. Available at: <http://openstreetmap.org.ph/map/palo>. Accessed 5 June 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Yi, Carine J. et. al. (2015) ‘Storm Surge Mapping of Typhoon Haiyan and Its Impact in Tanauan Leyte Philippines’, *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, Vol. 13, pps. 207-214. Available at:

[https://www.academia.edu/14096434/Storm\\_surge\\_mapping\\_of\\_typhoon\\_Haiyan\\_and\\_its\\_impact\\_in\\_Tanauan\\_Leyte\\_Philippines](https://www.academia.edu/14096434/Storm_surge_mapping_of_typhoon_Haiyan_and_its_impact_in_Tanauan_Leyte_Philippines). Accessed 5 June 2016.

<sup>10</sup> For further details see: Lagmay, Alfredo Mahar Francisco (2014) ‘Devastating Storm Surges of Typhoon Yolanda’ Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards, June 2. Available at: <http://blog.noah.dost.gov.ph/2014/06/02/devastating-storm-surges-of-typhoon-yolanda/>. Accessed 8 July 2016.

typhoon but was less accessible. Time, money and safety<sup>11</sup>, as well as comparability, dictated our choice of LGUs.

17 of the barangays chosen were coastal and ‘most vulnerable’ to the typhoon. The remaining three were ‘least affected’ by the typhoon and are used as a control group. We chose ‘least affected’ barangays within our LGUs, as opposed to those completely unaffected elsewhere, for two reasons. Firstly, virtually the whole of the Visayan region was affected by the typhoon so it would be problematic to identify completely unaffected Visayan barangays comparable to those already chosen. Secondly, by choosing relatively unaffected barangays within our existing LGU sample, we will be able to draw comparisons between LGU performance and across barangays within relative proximity to each other. Whilst all barangays in the LGUs chosen suffered some degree of damage from the typhoon, those further inland avoided the storm surge. An overall picture can therefore be built that will reveal how and why poverty relief strategies work better or worse in different administrative units under similar conditions.

We conducted a series of interviews with barangay captains, local mayors, local government officials, the staff of international and national aid agencies and local businessmen. We also conducted a series of focus group discussions (FGDs)<sup>12</sup> with local residents. Our focus groups comprised women, young people (out of school youth), people with disabilities, the elderly and mixed groups. By organizing the groups in such a way we hoped to capture a variety of experiences that might be otherwise lost if we only focused on mixed groups. For ethical reasons we did not include any respondents under eighteen, unless they were accompanied by a responsible adult. Focus groups averaged around ten respondents and participants were given a token gift of grocery items to compensate for their time.

We also conducted 800 surveys across our chosen barangays. The surveys are organized on the basis of random sampling. The questions are designed to provide data on attitudes to risk, vulnerability and resilience and the level of both the individual respondent and their communities. We also take account of gender, age, socioeconomic status and disability as variables that impact upon engagement with relief agencies and social and physical recovery after Yolanda. The surveys are designed to gather ‘self-rated’<sup>13</sup> evidence on survivors experience and material situation. Whilst there is a danger of subjectivity in this process the scale of the surveys, 800 x 3 over three years, is designed to be large enough to be credible as a representative sample of the area under research. Conducting the surveys over time will also allow us to identify whether survivors see an improvement in their situation or not. It is useful to use self-rating over time but not necessarily across widely

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<sup>11</sup> The armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People’s Army, has active insurgents in Samar. See: Williams, Helen (2013) ‘The Never Ending War in the Wounded Land: The New People’s Army on Samar’, *Journal of Geography and Geology*, Vol. 5, No.4, pps. 29-49.

<sup>12</sup> Details of our focus group questions are available here: <http://www.projectyolanda.org/project-yolanda/documents/project-yolanda-barangay-fgd-guide.pdf>. Accessed 6 June 2016.

<sup>13</sup> See: Mahar, Mangahas (2008) ‘SWS Monitoring of Self-Rated Deprivation’, Completed Paper for the PIDS-NEDA-UNDP project ‘Comprehensive Documentation and Analysis of Issues on the Official Poverty Estimation Methodology of the Philippines’. Available at: [https://www.sws.org.ph/Mangahas\\_Jul242008\\_Self%20Rated%20Deprivation.pdf](https://www.sws.org.ph/Mangahas_Jul242008_Self%20Rated%20Deprivation.pdf). Accessed 8 July 2016; Mahar, Mangahas, (1995) ‘Self-rated poverty in the Philippines, 1981-1992’, *Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pps. 40-52.

differing contexts (e.g. countries) as experience, cultural attitudes and needs may be context specific. This is an important issue for relief agencies as disaster relief strategies have to be appropriate for the social and physical context they are applied to so that they can sustainably 'build back better' in the medium and long term. Relief strategies work better if they are driven from the bottom up. Self-rating is therefore an appropriate strategy as it is a bottom up process that is driven from the people themselves. Top down strategies, such as estimates of poverty or well-being using quantitative indicators of income or wealth are top-down and devoid of contextual information.

Our survey fieldworkers were a mixed group of Filipino post-graduate students based in Tanauan, Palo and Leyte. They live in, or close to, the barangays that we surveyed. They also speak English and Waray, the local language. This was important for speaking to the locals in their own language and translating the survey questions and responses. Effective translation meant that the questions conveyed the desired request for information and the resulted in responses and observations that could be understood by the whole team. We took advice from our fieldworkers on the wording of the questions and how survey respondents would understand the questions. This was to ensure that evidence would not be 'lost in translation'. During a training day we ran a trial run of the questions with a number administrative staff at the University of the Philippines, Tacloban. The staff were Yolanda survivors themselves. We used the feedback from the training and trails to make final adjustments to the wording of our questions.

We provided each fieldworker with official ID cards so they can easier confirm that they are attached to our project. Fieldworkers are also required to return completed surveys to the fieldwork coordinator as soon as possible and to keep them secure at all times. Each survey respondent received a token gift of a strip of sachets of Nescafe coffee. These sachets were very popular and made it easier for our fieldworkers to find volunteers. Such tokens gifts were acceptable, indeed expected, in the post-Yolanda areas. However the is not necessarily the case elsewhere. Anyone budgeting for a similar project should investigate local cultural norms in respect of token or gift giving and budget accordingly.

Fluctuating supply and demand for certain goods in post disaster environments mean that budget planning can be difficult. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster items such as fuel, water, food and accommodation often rise sharply. Local workers with skill sets that include driving and knowledge of the local terrain, construction, social work, medics and knowledge of the local language and English can find themselves in heavy demand. Indeed we witnessed a whole industry that built around the needs of from the relief workers. Many locals were hired by national and international aid agencies and the wages that they could command increased. The cost of simple things like a cup of coffee or a meal also increased. It can also take while for prices to adjust downwards when demand dries up when the disaster industry scales down over time. This means that budget planning for post-disaster relief research is like trying to hit a moving target as the cost of food, accommodation, essential items and travel constantly shifts in relation to demand. To avoid stress on the budget a ten percent contingency amount should be incorporated if possible. Transnational projects also need to be mindful that their budget may be vulnerable to fluctuations in international exchange rates.

## **Organizing Fieldwork Responsibilities Amongst the Research Team**

Our core team comprises one European female, one Singaporean female, two Manila based Filipino females, one Manila based Filipino male and one Tacloban based Filipino female. Our Tacloban based team-mate, a faculty member at the University of the Philippines Tacloban, is an experienced research consultant has worked with groups such as World Vision, Plan Philippines and Intersos. This put her in an ideal position to recruit local fieldworkers, focus group documenters and interviewers that speak the local (Waray) language and know their way around the local communities. She is also very well connected with the local communities and the student population. This made her an obvious choice as a fieldwork coordinator.

As a team we decided that the European and Singaporean researchers would concentrate on interviewing national and international aid agencies, the military and government officials. This is because it was relatively easier for foreign researchers to get access to officials. In the case of government officials this is because foreigners were perceived as politically neutral. Government officials and aid workers also tended to have good English language skills. The European researcher interviewed the Mayors of all three LGUs and found them to be welcoming, informative and generous with their time. We have also managed to establish a network of contacts from relief agencies and the local Chamber of Commerce that keep us updated with progress reports and relief interventions. In general we found that people were used to being interviewed and were willing to talk about their experiences.

The principal investigator and co-investigators for this project were assigned an LGU each and interviewed all the barangay captains assigned to this project. In one or two cases barangay councilors were interviewed along with or instead of the barangay captain depending on who was available. In some cases a local fieldworker accompanied us to help with translation. We gave each barangay captain a framed certificate for their barangay's participation in the project and they seemed to appreciate this gesture. In one case our researcher was turned away from a barangay, as we had not conducted a courtesy call to the relevant mayor before we arrived in the barangay. This was quickly remedied and we were able to return and continue with our interviews. The initial refusal of the barangay captain to be interviewed can perhaps be explained by the high 'power distance' score of the Philippines on Geert Hofstede's cultural index<sup>14</sup>. In other words Philippine society is innately hierarchical meaning that the barangay captain would not cooperate with our project unless the accepted conventions of a courtesy call to the mayor had been met. Cultural niceties such as this are worth serious reflection. If such conventions are not followed then potentially fieldworkers may be refused access to certain areas, which could have knock on effects for the research design and case study selection. Following the same conventions we endeavored to meet the captains of each barangay before our survey fieldworkers started work in that particular area.

Whilst being foreign can open doors in terms of securing interviews, it can also cause problems. In the area that we researched people were generally used to seeing

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<sup>14</sup> Hofstede, Geert, 'What About the Philippines', <https://geert-hofstede.com/philippines.html>. Accessed 20 June 2015.



foreigners and welcoming of them, as a result of the international relief efforts. However, there tended to be an assumption that foreigners were relief workers and that they had some sort of influence over the allocation of aid. This meant that if a foreigner was involved in a focus group then respondents might exaggerate their plight in order to secure any aid that was potentially forthcoming. The perception that our team might have some sort of financial leverage was evident when respondents would very often list concerns or needs at the end of an interview, even when this had already been covered in the questions. Very often this issue related to livelihood. This was common when we interviewed barangay captains and barangay council members. It is significant that we conducted fieldwork at around the time that many aid agencies were leaving. Aid that might have been relatively liberally given in the past was now drying up. Therefore we took the decision to exclude our foreign researchers from focus group discussions.

People were generally happy to take part in focus groups however sometimes the organization of the meeting was difficult to control. Some focus group participants and survey respondents thought initially that aid would be given if they participated. This is because aid agencies had previously also conducted surveys and interviews to gather information on community profiles and asked people to sign attendance sheets before giving aid. The focus groups with the elderly in Tanauan and women in Palo attracted additional people when they heard that some of their neighbors would be attending a group, this was in the hope that immediate aid would be forthcoming. In one case we informed a barangay councilor that we would be arriving and that we would like to hold a discussion with no more than ten women. However when the team turned up every available woman in the village was waiting. This meant that some people were turned away. This was unfortunate; as we did not want to alienate anyone in the community or leave them with the impression that some 'chosen' people were able to avail of the food tokens that were giving to respondents, whilst others were excluded. We also found that sometimes when our teams were conducting focus groups respondents would text their friends to come and see the 'strangers' and that 'merienda' or small snacks were available. This meant that it was difficult to keep the focus groups organized and manageable.

However, once we explained the nature of our research, people would begin to share their stories in the hope that their experience would be shared with government and other groups that could possibly help them. Some community leaders explained that some people got used to the assistance and promises that they got immediately after Yolanda. Some people are still hoping for help from outside even if most of the aid has dried up. However, these leaders also said that they do not want this kind of dependence to continue.

We also found that in the focus groups for people with disabilities, sometimes it was hard or impossible for the people with disabilities to answer questions. This was a lesson learned for us. It might have been prudent to ask only carers to the meeting but this potentially leaves the problem of who will do the caring while the carers are at the meeting.

Our Singaporean researcher was also able to get an off the record interview with the Tzu Chi Foundation. The Tzu Chi Foundation has been extremely active in the

aftermath of Yolanda<sup>15</sup> but rarely, if ever, gives interviews. In order to get this interview our researcher turned up on spec at the Tzu Chi offices in Tacloban more than once before she was granted an interview with the main office manager who is a Filipino and the interview was conducted in English. Being a Chinese and a Buddhist certainly helped in terms of access to information and granted an interview.

Personal contact was important for our project when gathering data and conducting interviews. Conversational interviews with those that lived through Yolanda and were tasked with the relief efforts gleaned far more information than could have been gathered via a check box survey or online communication. As we move into the second year of our project we anticipate that our work in the barangays will get easier as we won't be strangers any more. For this reason we will deploy researchers to the barangays that they worked in previously, year on year, as far as possible, so they can build a relationship with the local community. The following section will address the emotional sensitivities of researching in a post-disaster environment.

### **Objectivity and Empathy in the Post-disaster Context**

The official 6,293 death toll from Typhoon Yolanda is highly contested<sup>16</sup>. Prior to the disaster President Benigno Aquino went on record saying that he was aiming for 'zero casualties'<sup>17</sup>. This meant that the mounting death toll became something of embarrassment to the President. On 15 November 2013 he called an estimate of 10,000 deaths, given by a local police chief in Leyte, the result of 'emotional trauma'<sup>18</sup>. The police chief was subsequently sacked. At a certain point the president ordered the counting of the dead to stop. The government website that lists casualties has no date so it impossible to know at which point it was last updated. At a church service at Tacloban Astrodome on the second anniversary of the typhoon the presiding priest commented that those that were found after the count had stopped were treated as though 'they did not matter'. The thousands of people standing along the external balconies of the astrodome erupted in a chorus of agreement at this statement. Some of the researchers on this project bore witness to this.

Before we visited any barangays we researched the background of every barangay captain and we became aware that some of the captains had lost family members. Virtually every barangay captain had also been in the area during the typhoon, some of the captains had not been in office during the typhoon but had taken over from those who died. The captain of barangay 88 in Tacloban gave the following response when we asked him what he did in the immediate aftermath of the typhoon:

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<sup>15</sup> Taiwan Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation Philippines. Available at: [http://tzuchi.org.ph/special\\_report\\_cat/timeline-for-typhoon-yolanda/](http://tzuchi.org.ph/special_report_cat/timeline-for-typhoon-yolanda/). Accessed 6 June 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Felipe, Cecile Suerte (2015) 'Yolanda Death Toll as High as 15,000, priest says', *The Philippine Star*, 5 January. Available at: <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/01/05/1409522/yolanda-death-toll-high-15000-priest-says>. Accessed 7 July 2016. Avila, Bobit S. (2014), 'How many casualties from typhoon "Yolanda"', *The Philippine Star*, 23 August. Available at: <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/01/05/1409522/yolanda-death-toll-high-15000-priest-says>. Accessed 7 August 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Francisco, Rosemarie (2013) 'Analysis: Hero to Zero. Philippine President Feels Typhoon Backlash', *Reuters*, 15 November. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-typhoon-aquino-analysis-idUSBRE9AE07U20131115>. Accessed 7 July 2016.

<sup>18</sup> BBC News (2013) 'Philippines Typhoon: President Lowers death toll estimate', 13 November. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-24920250>. Accessed 7 July 2016.



We collected dead bodies, especially children. I have building here for the youth that was not used, so I put here the dead bodies of the children, and maybe two old women. Inside for safety. [...] Dead bodies were a big problem. They smelled bad already so we put them on the Rotunda (roundabout at main round), maybe there are 40 bodies lined up at the Rotunda, and others we put them along the road so they can be picked up any time.

This barangay captain went on to describe still finding bodies that were coming back up out of the ground two years after the typhoon<sup>19</sup>. It is also widely believed that many bodies still lie in Cancabato Bay, which curves between the airport and the town center in Tacloban. Part of the problem with the death count for Yolanda was that unless a body was presented to the authorities then that person was not included in the count. This means that the 1, 062 reported as missing are not included. Survivors also resorted to burying their own dead, as the authorities could not cope with the scale of the task. In reality the true death toll from typhoon Yolanda will never be known.

Verity Rushton of UNICEF described arriving in Tacloban on 24 November (just over two weeks after Yolanda hit) as follows: ‘There was absolute and total destruction that took your breath away. Everywhere there were high piles of debris, people’s personal articles were still on the streets, there were even dead bodies in the debris, and housing and buildings were destroyed’. Many people have also described the aftermath as a war zone or like a nuclear war. We were therefore acutely aware that we were sending fieldworkers, and ourselves, into situations that could be highly emotional. However our local fieldworkers advised us that mostly people would be happy to volunteer their stories, even if people had lost loved ones. Some of the fieldworkers were survivors themselves so they were well placed to make this judgment. Indeed it seemed that enough time (two years) had passed to allow people to be able to talk about their experiences. The researchers involved in the focus group discussions found that people were mostly happy to engage in conversation in the hope that their experience might make a difference and that their story would be told. That being said some discussions were emotionally draining for those being interviewed and the interviewer. On occasion tears were shed. As researchers we had to retain our objectivity but be empathetic to the narrative of the survivors.

## **Cultures of Dependency**

The Philippines is not an aid dependent country. Aid dependency is ‘a situation in which a country cannot perform many of the core functions of government, such as operations and maintenance, or the delivery of basic public services, without foreign aid funding and expertise<sup>20</sup>. Yolanda triggered a large-scale international relief effort however the core functions of government were compromised at only the local, not the national level. Local government officials and members of the Philippine National

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<sup>19</sup> Arnaiz, Vicky (2015) ‘Tacloban Clean Up Yields Human Bones’, Philippines Daily Inquirer. 28 November. <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/743121/tacloban-cleanup-yields-human-bones>. Accessed 7 July 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Bräutigam, Deborah (2000) Aid Dependence and Governance, EGDI Expert Group on Development Issues: Stockholm. Available at: [http://www.swisstph.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Pdfs/swap/swap404.pdf](http://www.swisstph.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Pdfs/swap/swap404.pdf). Accessed 21 June 2016.

Police (PNP), who would normally have been allocated the role of first responders, were themselves victims of the typhoon. In the immediate aftermath of the Yolanda, given its scale and severity, they were reliant on outside help. Tasks such as burying the dead, clearing the streets of debris, tending to the injured and the provision of food and water were major challenges. Nevertheless early on in the relief effort Beleke Galeta, the secretary general of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, warned against the cultivation of aid dependency in Yolanda hit regions. The Philippine Foreign Aid Transparency Hub reports that USD 386,249,588.96<sup>21</sup> was received in international calamity aid and assistance<sup>22</sup>.

In order to avoid aid dependency Actionaid advocates ‘real aid’. Real aid embodies individual empowerment, better governance and ‘it is accountable, transparent from beginning to end, and gets the most out of every dollar spent. It supports developing countries to make their own decisions’<sup>23</sup>. Whilst Actionaid discusses aid dependency at the level of national governance the concept can also be applied at the LGU or barangay level. Hence Galeta’s early warning against aid dependency in the Yolanda hit regions.

In the immediate aftermath of the typhoon some survivors were also given ‘cash for relief’ and ‘cash for work’ from aid agencies to help clear debris. The initial cash without work distribution was useful, as people had literally lost everything they had. However, cash distribution without conditions is problematic if it goes on beyond the immediate emergency phase. It is human nature to opt for non-work cash and this of course further entrenches the ‘poor man’s mentality’ and aid dependency. However, cash for work programs were forward thinking as they helped to develop a sense of responsibility and ‘stakeholdership’, as opposed to inertia or helplessness, on the part of recipients.

The idea of victims as stakeholders was also achieved through ‘sweat equity’<sup>24</sup> an idea that requires the time and labour of an individual or family as a contribution to a project that will improve the community as a whole. Caritas formalize sweat equity through a ‘Certificate of Commitment’ and log, sometimes publicly, the time or commitment that beneficiaries devote to a scheme. The Tzu Chi Foundation paid PHP 500 per day cash for work but also distributed cash for relief of ‘PHP 8,000 to families with 1-2 members, PHP 12,000 to those with 3-4 members and PHP 15,000

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<sup>21</sup> Foreign Aid Transparency Hub. Available at: <http://www.gov.ph/faith/>. Accessed 21 June 2016. However the Hub is not without its critics, see: Orendain, Simone (2013) ‘Philippines Struggles to Account for Millions in Typhoon Aid’, *Voice of America*, 8 December. Available at: <http://www.voanews.com/content/philippines-struggles-to-account-for-600-million-in-foreign-typhoon-aid/1885355.html>. Accessed 23 June 2016.

<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of transparency the Philippine government set up the Foreign Aid Transparency Hub although critics have questioned the accuracy and the efficacy of the Hub and the allocation of international donations. Social Watch Philippines has claimed that the 2016 government budget for the Yolanda Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program lacks transparency as money allocated to Yolanda victims has previously been diverted to other calamities.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas, Anna (2011), *Real Aid: Ending Aid Dependency*, Actionaid: London. Available at: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/real\\_aid\\_3.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/real_aid_3.pdf). Accessed 21 June 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (n.d.) ‘Guidance Notes of Community Participation/Sweat Equity/Beneficiary Contribution’. Available at: <http://www.caritasphilippines.org/final-guidance-on-sweat-equity/>. Accessed 22 June 2016.

to families with 5 members and up<sup>25</sup> with no checks on where it was being spent<sup>26</sup>. We saw Tzu Chi handing out free bags of rice as late as November 2015. They also continue to allocate funds for medical fees,<sup>27</sup> housing and schools<sup>28</sup>.

The ongoing allocation of aid meant that one of the first assumptions about strangers to the communities was that they might be from aid agencies. Community organizers even tried to solicit money from our team for the use of the barangay halls when normally this is free for all community meetings. We did not pay the suggested fee but we did give food tokens. We also provided ‘merienda’ for the focus groups, as this is the norm for meetings in Filipino society. The ritual of ‘breaking bread’ helped to foster friendly interaction in the groups. This ritual is worth accounting for when budgeting for fieldwork activities. ‘Let’s eat’ is a common saying that acts as an invitation in the Philippines and even the poorest households will offer to share their meals with visitors. It would be seen as rude to refuse. Ignoring these cultural niceties would not help build up a good working relationship with the communities.

During fieldwork we always introduce ourselves as academics, as opposed to researchers being funded by the UK government, so there was no confusion about what our role is. Communities in Leyte are extremely friendly and often people will engage in conversation with strangers on the street. This made our work much easier than it would have been if we were working in a post conflict zone, an area divided by ethnic strife or in a location where the locals had a particular aversion to foreigners. Jeff Manibay, CEO of CAT 8 TV in Tacloban confirmed this when he stated that he saw ‘Tacloban as a global laboratory for disaster risk and reduction management and rehabilitation’<sup>29</sup> and that Leyte was the ‘perfect laboratory’ to test disaster relief strategies. The reasoning for this was that 1. There are no security concerns (compared to areas such as Somalia or Haiti) 2. People are not hostile and they are culturally predisposed to be grateful to those that offer help 3. Many of the people can converse in the English language (in varying degrees). However this also means that strategies that work in Leyte might not work in areas that are more hostile. Disaster relief strategies must be context specific in order to be sustainable.

## Aid Allocation

In the chaotic environment immediately after a disaster it can be expected that aid is delivered without time consuming needs based assessment but in the longer term some assessment has to be undertaken to ensure that aid is distributed to those most in

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<sup>25</sup> Nadal, Nana (2014) ‘Tzu Chi Means Compassion Relief’, 17 February. Available at: <http://nananadal.ph/tzu-chi-means-compassion-relief/>. Accessed 22 June 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Brondiale, Lineth, ‘Monetary Relief to Aid Typhoon Survivors in the Philippines’, Tzu Chi. Available at: [http://tw.tzuchi.org/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1177%3Amonetary-relief-aid-to-typhoon-survivors-in-philippines&catid=3%3Aasia&Itemid=204&lang=en](http://tw.tzuchi.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1177%3Amonetary-relief-aid-to-typhoon-survivors-in-philippines&catid=3%3Aasia&Itemid=204&lang=en). Accessed 22 June 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation (2015) ‘Tzu Chi’s free clinic delivers quality health care to typhoon survivors in the Philippines’, Re<http://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/tzu-chis-free-clinic-delivers-quality-health-care-typhoon-survivors-philippines>. Accessed 7 July 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Del Mundo, Ida Anita Q. (2015) ‘Tacloban Now After Yolanda’ <http://www.pressreader.com/philippines/the-philippine-star/20151101/281526519923591/TextView>. Accessed 7 July 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Manibay, Jeff. CEO Cat 8 TV. Interview 24 July 2014. Tacloban.

need. The allocation of aid is a complex and ultimately political process. Barangay captains were heavily involved in compiling lists of residents in their barangays that qualified for aid. Some residents reported that those who were perceived to oppose the barangay captain politically were excluded from the lists. This meant that they did not qualify for aid. Other residents noted that even those who did not need much help were identified as beneficiaries. Some residents complained that barangay captains and even municipal officers skimmed off the best goods (imported goods were regarded as premium) for themselves, whilst others reported that their captains were scrupulously fair. Residents also reported that aid agencies had their own criteria to identify the neediest and undertook their own surveys. Those most in need were typically young children, pregnant women and senior citizens. Some residents reported that if some people were allocated goods and not others it caused resentment and those without assistance resorted to 'dirty tricks' to get it<sup>30</sup>.

Before we conducted surveys or interviews in any barangays we sent messengers with letters informing the barangay captains about our project. The barangay captains were accommodating and informed local residents that we were looking for people to take part in our project. However we were unable to ascertain whether people had been discouraged or blocked from participating. We did make it clear to respondents that their responses would be anonymous and judging from their responses they did not refrain from critical comments. Nevertheless one fieldworker did report that he was questioned and trailed by a member of the barangay council. During training we discussed security with the fieldworkers and emphasized that they should not enter into any situation or building that made them feel uncomfortable. We also advised them that they should make their excuses and leave any situation in which they felt threatened or uneasy. Surveys were conducted during daylight hours and fieldworkers were supplied with personal insurance for the duration of the project.

Fieldworkers reported that the completion of survey forms, intended as a one on one activity, sometimes ended up as a group activity as friends and neighbours voiced opinions and offered advice. This is a fairly common phenomenon when conducting research in the Philippines. On the other hand we found that respondents could not identify anyone in their communities that had retreated from engaging with the community as a result of the disaster. Consequently accounting for the 'shame' of poverty<sup>31</sup> or the failure of 'bonding' social capital<sup>32</sup> because someone has deliberately distanced themselves from a community bears further investigation. In post disaster situations this could also be because of trauma. Such individuals are highly unlikely to turn up to focus groups.

Not only did certain individuals or groups not receive aid, those who did receive it may have received more than they needed or the type of aid received may have been unsuitable for their needs. This creates a problem for those dispensing aid and those

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<sup>30</sup> These findings correspond with the findings in: See: Ong, Jonathan Corpus, Floes, Jaime Manuel and Combinido, Pamela (2015) 'Obligated to be Grateful', Plan International: Woking. Available at: <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:w2FJ9csKDuEJ:www.alnap.org/pool/files/obliged-to-be-grateful-report.pdf+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk&client=safari>. Accessed 21 June 2016.

<sup>31</sup> See: Chase, Elaine and Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, Grace (2015) *Poverty and Shame*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.

<sup>32</sup> Aldrich, Daniel P. (2012) *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster recovery*, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London.

assessing the effectiveness of that aid. We found that if people were offered aid they were unlikely to say no, even if they had no use for the type of aid offered. The avoidance of ‘no’ is a cultural trait that dictates the avoidance of a negative response. Filipinos generally have a high regard for hierarchy, as evidenced by their ranking of 94 in Hofstede’s Power Distance Index<sup>33</sup> and will avoid loss of ‘face’<sup>34</sup> if at all possible. The avoidance of offence to others results in ‘strenuously avoiding that rude word “no”<sup>35</sup>. A negative response may also be avoided in case it blocks any further aid that may be forthcoming. We found that this was particularly the case with fishing boats. The following response of a Tacloban barangay captain exemplifies this:

An NGO who came here they tried to help about the fishing, not knowing that all people here are not fishermen. We have some [residents] that got the boat, Filipino attitude they just wanted to get the boat but they did not use the boat for a living. It is confusing because we have more boats now but the livelihood is less than before Yolanda<sup>36</sup>.

This is clearly a problem for the allocation of aid. Relief workers assumed that a boat would be useful for people living near the sea and those receiving the aid did not bother to correct this misperception. In the Philippines, in common with many other Asian countries, ‘the need to save face and be non-confrontational can mean contacts feel unable to say “no” or admit that a project is unlikely to succeed<sup>37</sup>’. This subtle distinction in language could lead foreigners to assume a positive response when in fact this was not the case. This can provide problems for researchers and aid agencies alike. It is essential that interview evidence and survey data are cross-referenced with other evidence in order to make findings as robust as possible. For instance every fisherman should be registered at City Hall; therefore official data can be cross-referenced with data gathered in barangays. We also talked to NGOs to check the criteria against which boats and equipment were allocated. According to an interview with an international NGO, coordination within and between different NGOs is a major issue in terms of effective aid allocation. In many instances, due to the immediate aftermath chaotic situation which were compounded by the problem of lack of information, distribution of aid tend to be chaotic and uncoordinated, which would result in duplication of aid in many places and none in some places. This will impact on the effectiveness of aid.

It is essential that relief goods, in money and kind, are treated as ‘real aid’ otherwise a culture of dependency can be created. It is therefore dangerous for relief agencies to be driven by institutional timeframes (annual accounting) and conditionality (aid must be spent on certain items and not others) that lacks contextual awareness. It is also a mistake for relief agencies to treat the distribution of resources as a public relations exercise guided by the need to resonate with taxpayers or donors, as opposed to real

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<sup>33</sup> Hofstede, Geert (n.d.) ‘What about the Philippines’. Available at: <https://geert-hofstede.com/philippines.html>. Accessed 15 July 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Communicaid (n.d.) *The Philippines*. Available at: <https://www.communicaid.com/country/the-philippines/>. Accessed 15 July 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Gesteland, Richard (2012) *Cross Cultural Business Behaviour: A Guide for Global Management*, Copenhagen Business School Press: Copenhagen, p. 186.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Barangay Captain, Ciriaco Villanue III, Brgy. 55-A, Tacloban. 27 November 2015.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Saying “No”’: How Conflict Avoidance Varies Between Countries’, *TranslateMedia*, Available from: <https://www.translatemedia.com/translation-blog/saying-no-how-conflict-avoidance-varies-between-cultures/>. Accessed 21 June 2016.



need on the ground. The need to be seen to be doing something arguably means that material assets (boats, sea defences, housing) are favoured over social assets, such as funding bottom up community support groups. Activities that support bonding (within communities), bridging (between communities and linking (with other institutions and organizations) social capital<sup>38</sup> are essential for community resilience, but less easy to quantify than material assets.

Handing out money with little or no check or balance means that money is wasted and communities may be undermined if recipients perceive that aid is distributed unfairly or randomly. In one focus group discussion respondents reported that whilst residents helped each other in the aftermath of the typhoon, community cohesion worsened when relief operations started as people argued over the allocation of aid. However they also noted that *burubligay* (volunteerism and communal solidarity) would come to the fore if problems arose. The lesson for aid agencies is that whilst typhoon Yolanda destroyed communities the inequitable, or perception of inequitable allocation of aid, can stymie the social as well as physical reconstruction of communities. Communities obviously need material resources in the aftermath of a disaster. However the poor management of material aid, sometimes inevitable during a disaster of the scale of typhoon Yolanda, can undermine community resilience in the longer term. A further danger is that programs will be ‘orphaned’ when donor agencies pull out and local government systems may be unwilling or unable to support half-finished projects.

### **Dependency Mentality**

Material aid dependency can bring with it “‘dependency mentality” or “‘dependency syndrome”, in which relief undermines initiative’.<sup>39</sup> Barangay captains in Palo reported to our Singaporean researcher that aid dependency was a problem and she noted that ‘people will not attend meetings unless there is some kind of aid to be distributed. There are still people who are jobless and waiting for handouts’. When she visited resettlement houses in Palo residents asked if the Chinese government (she currently lives and works in China) could give more money for them to build the second storey of their house. It was typical for locals to try and establish which aid agencies our researchers were from. Our fieldwork coordinator reported that even before Typhoon Yolanda people were not interested in attending meetings or activities unless they got something from it. She identifies this as ‘dole out mentality’, introduced during the Marcos years<sup>40</sup> and further strengthened by patronage politics.

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<sup>38</sup> Mathbor, Golam M. ( 2007) ‘Enhancement of Community Preparedness for Natural Disasters: The role of social work in building social capital for sustainable disaster relief and management’, *International Social Work*, Vol. 50, No. 3, pps. 357-369. Available from: <http://isw.sagepub.com/content/50/3/357.full.pdf+html>. Accessed 15 July 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Harvey, Paul and Lind, Jeremy (2005) Dependency and Humanitarian relief: a critical analysis. Humanitarian Policy Group Research Briefing, No. 19, July. Available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/335.pdf>. Accessed 15 July 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Tacloban is the hometown of former first lady Imelda Marcos. The Marcos family has been particularly critical of the Aquino government in their handling of the Yolanda relief effort. The Mayor of Tacloban, Alfred Romualdez, is Imelda Marcos’ nephew. See e.g.: Antiporda, Jefferson and Tolentino, Reina (2015) ‘Marcos Blasts “insensitive” government’, *The Manila Times*, 2 November. Available at: <http://www.manilatimes.net/marcos-blasts-insensitive-govt/226990/>. Accessed 23 June 2016; Panguie, Jene-Anne (2015) ‘Imelda in E. Visayas: Bring back a Marcos to national government’,



Patronage politics operate on the basis on the patron or elected official supplying goods and services to those who are loyal to him/her in exchange for political support. This is also known as ‘clientelism’<sup>41</sup>. Clientelism is based on reciprocal inducements. Politicians ‘supply benefits only to individuals or groups that support or promise to support the politician. Likewise, the client supports only that politician who delivers, or promises to deliver, a valued benefit in return for the client’s support’<sup>42</sup>. In the upper echelons of society clientelism ring fences benefits for those loyal to the patron to the extent that democracy is distorted and economic competition is undermined. Amongst the poor patron client relations mean that political loyalty can be bought.

In the focus groups and interviews that we conducted even before the election period respondents mentioned how local election campaigns were already affecting them. For instance, in 2015, one leader from a resettlement area mentioned that the incumbent party was already trying to recruit leaders to work for their campaign. This affected the unity of resettlement communities, as not everyone was willing to support a ‘patron’ they were not happy with. In some of the focus groups conducted respondents were critical of incumbents running for reelection in relation to their performance during and after Yolanda. Other focus group participants also mentioned receiving money to attend the rallies of candidates running for President and Vice President.

The embedded mindset of clientelism in the Philippines means that humanitarian agencies can be equated with ‘patrons’ and, whilst locals are grateful for their help, they also expect to be bought, in other words receive a ‘dole out’. For our fieldwork this meant that the food tokens that we gave for participation in interviews and focus groups were very important. People had an expectation of ‘something’ from us, ‘the patron’, in return for them, ‘the client’ cooperating and supporting our work. For the reasons outlined above we did not undertake fieldwork during or directly after the 2016 election period as loyalties, memory and material assessment could have been distorted by the campaign. The patron-client relationship also means that typhoon victims who have received help from international agencies are less likely to be critical of those agencies as this would be akin to disloyalty to the patron<sup>43</sup>. Aid agencies can find it difficult to make accurate assessments of how effective their emergency initiatives and longer-term programs have been because of a culture of avoiding ‘no’ and a clientelist mentality. In the case of boats this reached the stage where the locals were jokingly calling unused fishing boats ‘solar boats’ as they lay in the sun all day.

Lessons that can be taken from these observations are that if locals are being asked about the effectiveness of an aid program the question might have to be framed in a way that avoids simple yes/no answers. For instance we asked barangay captains how many boats were in barangays before and after the typhoon rather than did you have a

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Rappler, 26 April. Available at: <http://www.rappler.com/nation/politics/elections/2016/130790-imelda-marcos-eastern-visayas>. Accessed 23 June 2016.

<sup>41</sup> See e.g. Hicken. Allen (2011) ‘Clientelism’, *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 14, pps. 289-310.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 291.

<sup>43</sup> See: Ong, op.cit.

use for the all boats your community received. The latter question may have just elicited a positive response, whereas the former version gave us an idea of whether the boats received actually correlated to the number of fishermen in the barangay. However when we asked ‘were households given more boats than they need?’ in focus groups people said no. Nevertheless the discussion between participants in focus groups acted as ‘internal validation’. This process is absent in a one on one interview with a barangay captain. Focus group responses went beyond scratching the surface of survivor experience and were useful in order to deepen our findings.

However despite the idea of a ‘dole out’ mentality, interviewees virtually always stated that they needed livelihood or money to start up a small business as opposed to money for day-to-day needs. It was common for interviewees to return to this issue at the end of an interview when asked if they had any other comments, even if it had already been covered. On the whole the victims of typhoon Yolanda did not lack initiative they lacked opportunity. This is one of the core issues that must be addressed if communities are to be ‘built back better’. If aid agencies provide emergency relief and training but leave before self-sustaining livelihood is in evidence then the victims of natural disasters are in danger of impoverishment. Poverty was increasing in Eastern Leyte before Yolanda hit in 2013 however post Yolanda the incidence in poverty accelerated. This is a worrying trend going forward as many of the employment opportunities that were based on post-disaster reconstruction, such as building work and hotel and catering for aid workers will dry up over time.

### **Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Future Research**

The primary objective of this paper was to highlight issues that the ‘Poverty Alleviation in the Wake of Typhoon’ project identified and resolved in the construction and management of our project design and initial fieldwork. Fieldwork in any post disaster context in an alien cultural environment is challenging, even for those with experience of data gathering in developing countries. Over the course of the first year of our project we have learned a lot about our roles and identities as researchers and the logistical and financial challenges of organizing our project. We have also become more aware of the broader socio-political context of our research and how this context can influence how we go about gathering data and the actual data itself.

Post-disaster situations can be rapidly changing in social and material terms. Emotion and the legacy of trauma inevitably play into the stories that interviewees tell. Researchers should be mindful of the experience of disaster and the socio-economic difficulties that survivors continue to face. Researchers also have to understand that no survivor or agency has a monopoly on the ‘truth’ of the disaster. Different narratives should not be rejected as merely distortions of the truth. They are versions of events, mediated by time, socio-cultural belief and the sharing of memories, as remembered by individuals and communities. Inevitably there will be gaps, silences and distortions. Nevertheless it is our belief that the ‘voices’ of the survivors and those that worked for the agencies that helped are crucial in understanding why this disaster played out in the way that it did and how disaster relief and rehabilitation can be improved in the future. We also hope that our candid explanation of some of the

practical difficulties that we faced will help others with their research design and project planning.

We chose a representative sample of the area hit by Typhoon Yolanda that was big enough to make credible claims about what had worked well or badly in regards to disaster relief and rehabilitation. We had to think in practical terms about language, logistics, building a relationship with the communities and our budget. We also had to be reflexive in our approach. For instance when it became clear that a stranger might be regarded as an aid worker, we had to adapt our surveying strategy and hire local fieldworkers. Previously aid agencies had conducted surveys and then doled out aid. It was possible that the local expectation would be that we would do the same, especially if foreigners were conducting the surveys. This risked survey respondents inflating their plight in order to secure any aid that might be available. This danger was potentially heightened as many aid agencies were leaving as we arrived, nearly two years after Typhoon Yolanda.

We have also highlighted the cultural context of disaster and suggested that the existing culture of clientelism can transfer itself from politicians and voters to aid agencies and survivors. Power and an acceptance of hierarchy are central to clientelism. This is borne out by the high 'power distance' score for the Philippines on Hofstede's cultural index. Filipinos like a clear chain of command however this has not stopped criticism of officials where locals feel that they have abused their power in relation to the distribution of relief goods. Philippine culture also dictates that a negative response or simply saying 'no' is to be avoided as this might cause embarrassment or rejection. This meant that aid agencies that asked communities if they needed boats they were probably told yes or maybe when the real answer was no in many cases. When pushed on this issue some of our barangay captains laughed when they said that if someone offers you something you just take it whether you need it or not. This money would be better spent on other goods or services. However it is not always clear what these goods or services are or whether the donor has the reflexivity or remit to adapt its practice. All of these issues will remain relevant as aid agencies withdraw and the responsibility for rehabilitation is reallocated to local communities and the national government. They will also be relevant next time there is a disaster, whether this is in the Philippines or elsewhere.

Some relief projects were only active in Typhoon Yolanda affected areas for the short-term. However most long-term projects will be, or have been, turned over to the appropriate national and local agencies at a suitable juncture. In the Philippines, this is the nature of many projects, even if they deal with other issues such as conflict prevention or economic development. The continued success of these projects depends on the capacities of the LGUs and the local communities, with some assistance from the appropriate national government agencies. As we continue with our project we will compare how LGUs and communities, specifically Tacloban, Palo and Tanauan, deal with the turned over projects. We can then compare the experience of these three LGUs against best practice in other LGUs in the Philippines, especially those dealing with post-disaster projects.

In the longer term we will ask national and local officials, as well as communities, about the extent to which aid agencies engaged in capability-building activities. This will reveal the extent to which projects were 'orphaned' or whether local agencies and

communities managed to sustain and continue the projects over the longer term. We will investigate what the funding arrangements were and whether the national government, LGUs or communities were required to provide counterpart funding.

There are communities in Tacloban, Palo and Tanauan that are still working with some national government agencies and international NGOs such as like Catholic Relief Services in developing proposals and strengthening their skills and resources to manage projects in the long-term. We will look for evidence of the 'real aid' that Actionaid advocates. Over time we will test the extent to which the aid that has poured into Tacloban, Palo and Tanauan has empowered individuals and communities. We will assess whether aid has led to better governance, right down to the barangay level, examine whether this has been achieved in a transparent and accountable fashion and identify lessons that can be learned for the future.