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Working Paper III - Building Back Better in the Aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda: Shelter and Resilience

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(If quoting please use website details www.projectyolanda.org)

Introduction

On 8 November 2013 super-typhoon Yolanda (international name Haiyan) hit the Visayas region of the Philippines. Yolanda was one of the strongest typhoons ever to make landfall. Wind speeds reached 315kms per hour and a storm surge reached six meters in places². The damage was catastrophic. Official figures indicate that 6,293 individuals were reported dead, 1,061 went missing, 28,689 were injured. Urban and

¹This paper is part of the ESRC/DFID funded project, 'Poverty Alleviation in the Wake of Typhoon Yolanda' (Ref: ES/M008932/1). Further details can be found on our website: <http://www.projectyolanda.org>.

²Lagmay, Alfredo Mahar Francisco (2014) 'Devastating Storm Surges of Typhoon Yolanda', Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards (NOAH). Available at: <http://blog.noah.dost.gov.ph/2014/06/02/devastating-storm-surges-of-typhoon-yolanda/>. Accessed 28 October 2016.

rural areas were devastated³. 4.4 million people became Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). For some people this situation was only temporary and for others it is still ongoing. The typhoon affected 591 municipalities and total damage is estimated at US\$904,680,000. The total number of people affected by this disaster in terms of livelihood, environmental and food security was approximately 16 million people.

This working paper is part of the ESRC/DFID funded project ‘Poverty Alleviation in the Wake of Project Yolanda’⁴. It is the third paper in an ongoing series⁵. This article draws on our experiences gathering data in selected communities in the Eastern Visayas region of Leyte (Region VIII), specifically the adjacent towns of Tacloban City, Palo and Tanauan, which bore the brunt of Yolanda. Our project focuses on evidence drawn from 20 barangays of comparable size across Palo, Tanauan and Tacloban: eight barangays in Tacloban, six barangays in Palo and six in Tanauan⁶.

The paper is based on observations made during fieldwork in August/September and November 2016. The fieldwork was the third in a series of annual visits made to the region. Year on year observations have allowed us to monitor the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts over time. Previous visits took place in July 2014 (nine months after Yolanda), October/November 2015 (two years after Yolanda) and February/March 2016 (two years and five months after Yolanda). Evidence is drawn from surveys, focus group discussions, household interviews and interviews with local government officials, residents and governmental and non-governmental organizations. The information presented here also draws on information gathered

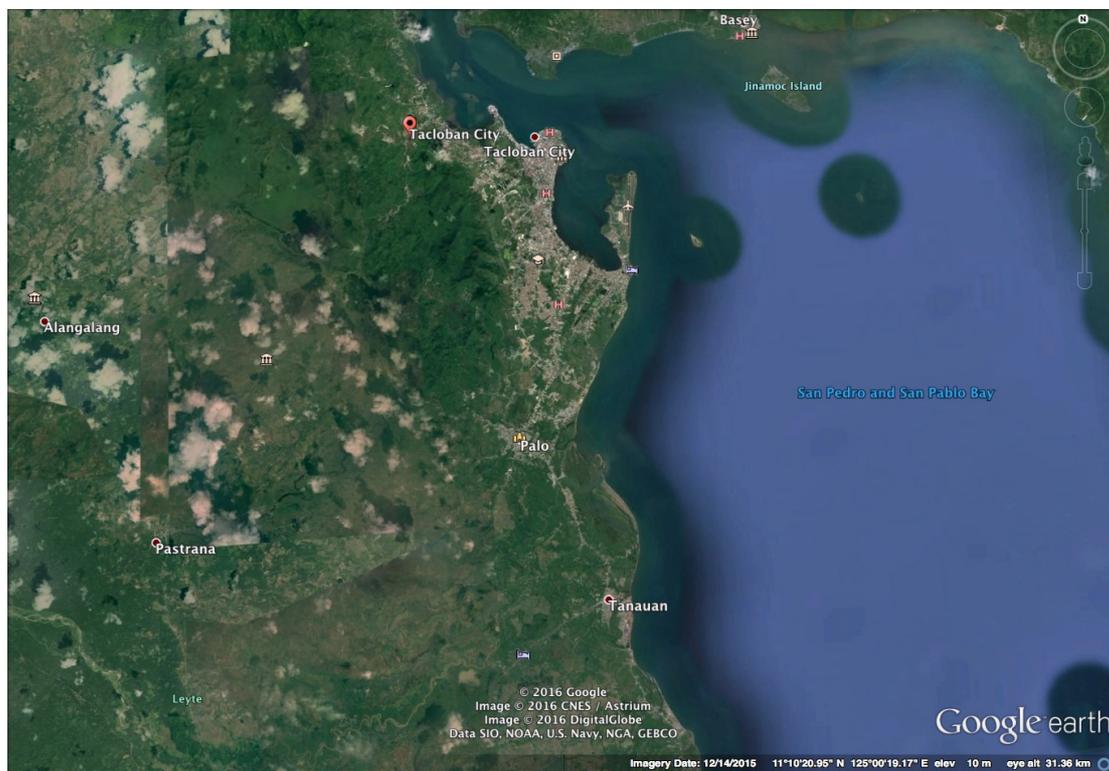
³ However the death toll for Yolanda is highly contested as a body had to be presented to the authorities in order for a death to be recorded. In many cases this was not possible as bodies were either swept away or families resorted to burying their own dead in the face of inaction by the authorities. See i.e. Gabieta, Joy (2014) ‘Yolanda Death Toll Still Vague 8 Months Later’, *Philippines Daily Inquirer*, 2 July. Available at: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/616060/yolanda-death-toll-still-vague-8-months-later>. Accessed 19 October 2015.

⁴ ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation, ESRC Reference: ES/M008932/1. This project is jointly run between the University of Nottingham UK and Ningbo and the University of the Philippines, Diliman.

⁵ Please see here for details of previous papers: <http://www.projectyolanda.org/project-yolanda/working-papers.aspx>. Accessed 24 October 2016.

⁶ The barangays chosen were: Tacloban: Barangays 54, 54-A, 66-A, 67, 87, 88, 89, Abucay (least affected); Palo: Cavite, Cogon, Libertad (least affected), Pawing, Salvacion, San Joaquin; and Tanauan: Bislig, Calogcog, Salvador (least affected), San Roque, Sta. Cruz, Sto. Niño. Unless barangays are identified as ‘least’ affect’ they were all ‘most affected’ coastal barangays.

from our fieldwork coordinator, who is permanently based in Tacloban, and a number of locally hired ‘family’ interviewers⁷.



Map: Tacloban, Palo and Tanauan

First hand observations made in 2016 revealed that large infrastructure projects are now well underway and that publicly and privately funded permanent relocation shelters have grown in number. We also observed localized building such as new barangay halls, multipurpose buildings, schools and road resurfacing. Large communal amenities, such as Tanauan Plaza, Tacloban Astrodome Memorial Park, Palo Cathedral and Tacloban’s Sto. Niño Church have also been completed. It was also evident that communities had ‘bedded into’ new and old settlements as gardens had been established or restored and community areas such as basketball pitches had been established.

⁷ The fieldwork coordinator for this project is Prof. Mangada Lim, Ladylyn. Family interviewers are: Clarence Galans; Christer Gerona; Kim O. Rosas; Theresia K. Rojas; Donabel S. Tumandao; and Marvie A. Villones We are indebted to them for their interview transcripts and additional observations. In addition, research assistant Ciray Morante helped coordinate interviews with Tanauan barangay officials and secured additional housing data from the Tanauan Mayor’s Office.

However, many problems remain. The move to permanent housing in Tacloban has been painfully slow and many more houses have been constructed than are occupied. This is primarily because of a lack of utilities in the newly completed residential areas in the northern barangays, specifically water and electricity. As a result, many people are still living in the ‘no-dwell’ or “no build” coastal zone or temporary/transitional housing and the Tacloban City government has abandoned trying to stop coastal dwellers rebuilding their houses in the zone. Due to the slow pace of housing provision many coastal dwellers are living in limbo as they wait to see if and when they will be rehoused. In Palo, there are still numerous households to be moved to the permanent housing but process is painstakingly slow. This is because the fisher folk are resisting, as the permanent sites are located far away from the sea, which affects their livelihood feasibility, and also because some of the permanent housing sites are poorly located and now constantly flooded. In Tanauan, Mayor Pel Tecson claimed in an interview in August 2016 that 80% of people in the “no-build” zones were in the permanent relocation sites and the rest would be moved by Christmas 2016. Data from the Tanauan Mayor’s Office do not show the percentage of households already relocated but the office reported that 991 households have already been relocated. However, some barangay captains say that during the day, people in relocation areas go back to the city center and coastal areas to work and for children, to go to school. Permanent water supply is also a problem in some of the Tanauan relocation sites.

This calls into question the mantra of ‘Build Back Better’ as outlined in the ‘Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda’ (RAY) plan published by the Aquino government in December 2013. The RAY document is intended as a guide to:

the recovery and reconstruction of the economy, lives, and livelihoods in the affected areas. The objective of the plan is to restore the economic and social conditions of these areas at the very least to their pre-typhoon levels and to a higher level of disaster resilience.⁸

This working paper will assess what ‘building back better’ really means and how the rhetoric measures up to reality in Leyte. Drawing on fieldwork data we will focus on

⁸ Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda: Build Back Better (2013), National Economic and Development Authority: Pasig City, 16 December.

housing, risk reduction and resilience building. These key themes will be linked to ‘adaptation’. Successful adaptation is key to moving beyond the pre-disaster vulnerabilities that exposed so many people to Yolanda’s wrath. We will address adaptation in the material and social sense as building back better is about sustainable communities⁹ as well as physical reconstruction. This paper will focus on housing, as adequate shelter is fundamental to human dignity and well-being and a crucial pre-requisite for the regular functioning of community life.

This paper will also question whether building back is enough. If economic and social conditions can only be restored, and not improved, to what extent can a higher level of disaster resilience be achieved? We will interrogate the notion of building forward, rather than back, and argue that resilience incorporates the adaption, rather than just restoration, of homes and communities. This paper will identify where material adaptations have been made and identify outstanding adaptations. In social terms we will address the problems that face communities that have been disrupted by relocation as a measure of whether these communities can be sustainable and ‘resilient’ over the longer term. We will incorporate the self-assessments of ‘building back better’ that we heard in these communities and argue that ‘better’ is actually hard to quantify.

Building Back Better

Before addressing what we understand by ‘build back better’ it is prudent to address why the need to build back arises. The need to reconstruct homes, jobs and communities is frequently caused by some sort of ‘disaster’. A disaster is commonly defined as:

a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community’s or society’s ability to

⁹ We acknowledge that there have also been a series of problems with delayed and inadequate temporary housing. However these communities are meant to be transient. We have chosen to focus on permanent housing in this paper in order to address the material and social sustainability of communities that are meant to be enduring.

cope using its own resources. Though often caused by nature, disasters can have human origins¹⁰.

It is also helpful to consider the socio-political scale and scope at which disasters have an impact. ‘At the household level, a disaster could result in a major illness, death, a substantial economic or social misfortune. At the community level, it could be a flood, a fire, collapse of buildings in an earthquake, the destruction of livelihoods, an epidemic or displacement through conflict. When occurring at district or provincial level, a large number of people can be affected’¹¹. Yolanda was a disaster at all of these levels. At the household level many families suffered bereavements and lost their belongings, homes and livelihood. At the community level communal infrastructure was destroyed. In the immediate aftermath of typhoon Yolanda 4.4 million people, or 30% of the population Yolanda affected areas, were internally displaced¹². As noted at the beginning of this paper, Yolanda affected around 16 million people. The scale of this far exceeded the ability of local communities or even Philippine society at a national level to cope. In places the devastation was near total.

The December 2013 *Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda: Build Back Better* (RAY) document, published by the Philippine National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), outlined a preliminary assessment of damage, loss and needs by sector. Sectors were defined as infrastructure, economic and social. The impact of Yolanda was also presented in cross-sectorial terms – that is the destruction and rebuilding of infrastructure also has a social impact. Prior to the release of this report President Benigno Aquino III stated that ‘Through RAY, we are not just settling for the minimum – we do not want our countrymen merely to make do. We are taking this chance not just to rebuild what was destroyed, but again, to build back better’¹³. It

¹⁰ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (n.d.) ‘What is a disaster?’. Available at: <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/about-disasters/what-is-a-disaster/>. Accessed 27 October 2016. This definition is also used by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

¹¹ Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2007) *Public Health Guide in Emergencies*. Available at: http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/center-for-refugee-and-disaster-response/publications_tools/publications/_CRDR_ICRC_Public_Health_Guide_Book/Forward.pdf. Accessed 27 October 2016.

¹² Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda, op. cit., p.13.

¹³ Aquino, Benigno S. III (2013) ‘Speech of President Aquino at the briefing on the Yolanda Reconstruction Assistance plan, December 18, 2013’, Official Gazette of the Republic of the

is therefore clear that the Philippine government was heavily influenced by the build back better approach to disaster relief.

The build back better approach first emerged in the lexicon of disaster relief after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. The core of the approach is the belief that building back to a pre-disaster material and social status quo is inadequate, as prior vulnerabilities will also be built back. Instead building back better strategies aim to rebuild resilient communities that can better withstand future disasters. There is a large body of research¹⁴ that explores the intricacies of the meaning of resilience however, for the purposes of this paper, we find the following definition useful: ‘the ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning, the capacity for self-organisation, and the capacity to adapt to stress and change’¹⁵. According to this definition resilience is not just the capacity to soak up the physical or social harm that a disaster might cause, it is also the ability to rebuild, regroup and modify the physical and social environment. However, such rebuilding should not mean the wholesale abandonment of a community or way of life. We find this definition particularly useful given the high number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) post-Yolanda and the consequent need to rebuild and reinvent communities in new safer locations.

The core tenets of building back better were outlined by former United States President Bill Clinton, acting in his capacity as UN Secretary-General Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, in the 2006 document, *Key Propositions for Building Back Better*. Clinton outlined ten propositions that focus on: recovery driven from the bottom up, equity, good governance, good information flows, institutional and agency coordination, accountability, sustainable livelihood, risk reduction and resilience building. These principles were also adopted in subsequent disasters such as the

Philippines. <http://www.gov.ph/2013/12/18/speech-of-president-aquino-at-the-briefing-on-reconstruction-assistance-on-yolanda/>. Accessed 27 October 2016.

¹⁴ Aldrich, Daniel P. (2012) *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery*, The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London; Berke, Philip R. and Campanella, Thomas J. (2006) ‘Planning for Post-Disaster Resiliency’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 604., pps. 192-207; Keck, Markus and Sakdapolrak, Patrick (2013) ‘What is Social Resilience? Lessons Learned and Ways Forward’ *Erdkunde*, Vol. 67, No. 1., pps. 5-19.

¹⁵ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007) ‘Climate Change 2007: Working Group II: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability: Glossary P-Z’. Available at: https://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg2/en/annexessglossary-p-z.html. Accessed 27 October 2017.

Kashmir earthquake in Pakistan, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar 2008 and the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Building Back Better aimed to break the cycle of emergency relief that alleviated suffering in the aftermath of a disaster yet failed to address the conditions that led to the exposure to disaster in the first place. Such an approach simply reinforces the status quo and does little or nothing to reduce risk or build resilience. Building back better is about the social and material regeneration of devastated communities and the development of good governance, equality of opportunity and access to resources. The end result of this process should be enhanced resilience against future disasters. However, as Bill Clinton notes, ‘rebuilding the physical, social, and human capital of shattered communities takes years’¹⁶.

Shelter in the Immediate Aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda

In the immediate aftermath of disaster many people remained in evacuation shelters. Many also resorted to living in heavily damaged but still standing concrete structures such as schools. Some survivors moved in with extended family members, although immediately after the disaster mobility was limited. Residents in Magallanes described to us how survivors were literally living amongst the rubble and surviving on what they could scavenge whilst they waited for help to come. The weather added to the discomfort of the survivors as it continued to rain for days. The mayor of Palo, Remedios Petilla, recalls that she told survivors arriving at the Municipal Hall in Palo ‘just put anything over your heads so that you can at least have shelter, until we can get you something sturdier’ (interview, November 13, 2015). In Tanauan, it took several days for help to come. So, most residents had to cook wet rice and drink dirty water to make do. Municipal and some barangay officials in Tanauan, like in barangay Bislig,¹⁷ had to go to Tacloban airport to get relief supplies themselves to bring to their constituents instead of waiting for the relief supplies to be delivered to them from Tacloban.

In the aftermath of a disaster it is obviously important to respond to the immediate needs of the victims. Food, water, shelter and medical supplies are primary concerns.

¹⁶ Clinton, William J. (2006) *Key Propositions for Building Back Better*, Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery. Available at: http://www.preventionweb.net/files/2054_VL108301.pdf. Accessed 27 October 2016.

¹⁷ Interview with Efren Merilo, Barangay Captain, Bislig, Tanauan, Leyte, 10 November 2016.

On 13 November ‘2000 jerry cans, 1400 hygiene kits, 600 mosquito nets, 1176 kitchen items, 1400 plastic sheets, 1400 blankets and 1900 sleeping mats’ (UNHCR 2013) were delivered by truck to Tacloban and on 14 November hundreds of family-sized tents arrived by air. Security concerns, blocked roads and a lack of available fuel hampered the distribution of goods. Nevertheless, tent cities sprang up fairly quickly. The tents donated by international aid agencies were not popular as they were hot, cramped, uncomfortable and a fire risk. Many of the barangay officials that we spoke to also reported that local schools were inhabited by a number of families; however, conditions were cramped and there was a lack of privacy and basic facilities like toilets. Some respondents reported that even when the children returned to school after the disaster, typically after two or three months, families were still living in the classrooms. The government moved relatively quickly to build bunkhouses as a means of accommodating those stuck in evacuation centers.

The ‘No-Dwell’ Zone

In order for communities to ‘bounce back’ housing is a fundamental issue. Without adequate housing communities are vulnerable and residents remain vulnerable to disruption. Adequate housing is essential in order to provide stability for survivors ‘post disaster housing provides privacy, protection and better health conditions for victims, which are decisive requirements to start a recovery and reconstruction program after a disaster’¹⁸. Resilience, as it relates to recovery from shock and stress, and the adaptation and growth of communities is fundamentally undermined if survivors are denied safe and permanent housing. The effect of Yolanda on infrastructure and housing was significant, due to the strong wind, heavy rainfall and storm surge. Our survey respondents reported that 39% of those living above the poverty threshold and 61.8% of those below the threshold spent at least some time in an emergency shelter. In coastal barangays the loss of housing stock was near total. In a needs assessment published on 17 November 2013, Plan International reported that 90% housing in coastal barangays was destroyed¹⁹. An initial multi-cluster assessment

¹⁸ Félix, Daniel, Branco, Jorge M. and Feio, Artur (2013) ‘Temporary Housing after disaster: A state of the art survey’, *Habitat International*, Vol. 40, pps. 136-141, p. 136)

¹⁹ Plan International PLAN (2013, November 17). *Rapid Needs Assessment Leyte 13-16 November*. Accessed from <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/.../RNA%20Report%20Leyte%20>. 15 November 2015.

of post-Yolanda needs reported that 515,179 houses were totally destroyed and 551,546 were partially destroyed in Yolanda affected areas²⁰.

Shortly after Yolanda a verbal directive from President Aquino ordered that no houses were to be built in a zone reaching 40 meters from the sea. A corresponding Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) driven directive was subsequently brought into law in March 2014 as House Resolution No. 947. The ‘no dwell zone’ is problematic for a number of reasons, not least because height above sea level, not distance from the sea, is a better indicator of safe ground. The 40-meter demarcation line is effectively meaningless. It is also problematic because responsibility for the administration of the 40-meter no-dwell was essentially devolved to Local Government Units (LGUs). Vilma Orca for Catholic Relief Services (whose project was active in Magallanes, Tacloban) stated that, ‘there is no clear definition of what the no dwell zone is. There is some debate of 40 meters, the City Government then said 20 meters, and then the DPWD put up markers’²¹. Meanwhile in Tanauan, the LGU decided that the no dwell zone would be 50 meters. Ronald Flores, the Vice Mayor of Tanauan, stated that the reasoning behind a 50-meter zone was so that more people would qualify for relocation to permanent housing²².

²⁰ (n.a.) (2013) Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment, Philippine Typhoon Haiyan, November. Available at: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MIRA_Report_-_Philippines_Haiyan_FINAL.pdf. Accessed 14 November 2016.

²¹ Interview Vilma Orca, Catholic Relief Services, 29 July 2014.

²² Interview Ronald Flores, Vice Mayor Tanauan, 18 August 2014.



No Build Marker with houses in the zone, Magallanes, Tacloban September 2016. Photo credit: Pauline Eadie

This no build zone was designed to stop people rebuilding in the danger zone on the premise that they would be prioritized for relocation to safe housing. However the construction of permanent, or even transitional housing²³, has been painfully slow. Not least because of delays in downloading reconstruction and relief funding from the national government²⁴ and alleged corruption and criminal negligence²⁵. This has left the local government with no choice than to tolerate rebuilding in the no build zone, as they are unable to come up with a practical alternative. This has been a particular problem in Tacloban. We saw for ourselves houses that had been rebuilt well within the no dwell zone and even over the sea on stilts. We encountered differing reactions to the prospect of relocation. Some residents living in the no dwell zone indicated that they were keen to move, notwithstanding concerns over lack of livelihood opportunities in the relocation areas. However, the no dwell zone has also been

²³ In Tanauan no transitional houses were built. People were relocated directly to permanent housing.

²⁴ Magtulis, Prinz (2016) 'Delays seen in release of Yolanda funds' *The Philippine Star*, 7 November. Available at: <http://www.philstar.com/nation/2016/11/07/1641079/delays-seen-release-yolanda-funds>. Accessed 15 November 2016.

²⁵ Cruz, Maricel and Reyes, Ronald O. (2016) 'Yolanda Rehab Fund Audit Pressed', *The Manila Standard*, 8 November. Available at: <http://thestandard.com.ph/news/-main-stories/top-stories/220874/yolanda-rehab-fund-audit-pressed.html>. Accessed 15 November 2016.

described as a ‘double displacement’²⁶, one displacement by Yolanda and another by the no-dwell policy. Vice Mayor of Tacloban, Jerry Yaokasin, confirmed to us that Tacloban City Hall had given up trying to stop rebuilding in the no dwell zone, as there was simply nowhere else available for people to go.

People in Yolanda-affected areas who lost their houses in the no dwell zone are excluded from receiving the DSWD funded Emergency Shelter Assistance (ESA) of 30,000 PHP for a totally destroyed house and 10,000 PHP for a partially destroyed house. This is to deter them from rebuilding in-situ. NGOs and INGOs were also restricted by the LGUs from assisting rebuilding in these zones, but this policy was subsequently abandoned. In some barangays in Palo, the residents only received this funding in May 2015, nearly two years after the disaster²⁷. In Tanauan, ESA was reportedly distributed immediately but some barangay captains reported that ESA beneficiaries with totally destroyed homes got PhP 10,000 in cash only. The outstanding PhP 20,000 was received in kind as vouchers for housing materials. Reportedly others did not get anything, or they got only PhP 10,000 without vouchers, even though they were qualified. Responses from FGDs with various sectors and interviews with Tanauan barangay officials echoed complaints that only those residents in barangays where officials are allies of the mayor received ESA. Municipal Hall data somewhat confirm that not all barangays received ESA as they said that ESA was only distributed in seven barangays and a few other households. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) subsequently reported that ‘unsupported reconstruction was being undertaken without adequate materials or expertise’ in the no dwell zone²⁸.

Building Back Better ‘in-situ’

In the coastal barangays examined for this project the most vulnerable housing stock, pre-Yolanda, was often typical shanty housing made from low-grade plywood, breeze

²⁶ Interview Joli Torelia, Senior Community Organizer, Tacloban Team, Urban Poor Associates, 9 September 2016.

²⁷ Interview Barangay Cavite residents, 9 November 2015.

²⁸ Catholic Relief Services (2015). ‘Urban Shelter and Settlement Recovery: a menu of options for households’. Available from: <http://odihpn.org/magazine/urban-shelter-and-settlement-recovery-a-%C2%91menu-of-options%C2%92-for-households/>. Accessed 14 November 2016.

blocs and corrugated iron roofs. These houses were located near or even over the sea, in what is now classified as the no-dwell zone, on stilts. Pathways along these communities were made up of a network of sea walls. These vulnerable communities had been rebuilt, often with reclaimed or recycled materials, despite being in the no-dwell zone. The house below is in the Magallanes area of Tacloban and is built on stilts over the sea. The sea wall can be seen on the left.



Magallanes, Tacloban, September 2016. Photo credit: Pauline Eadie

For these households there has been little or no adaptation, as they currently do not have the capacity to adapt. These coastal communities operate on the basis of piecemeal endurance, not resilience. They do not have the means to move anywhere else and although government assisted relocation is pending, residents and the barangay council had been given no concrete information from City Hall about when they might be able to relocate to permanent housing. Residents made the assumption that the most vulnerable families (poorest and with most children) would be relocated first. The captains of the two barangays that we are monitoring in Anibong said that none of their residents have been relocated. In Magallanes the captains estimated a

figure of 20 percent had been relocated. In the photograph below in-situ repairs can clearly be seen in the form of new roofing.



Magallanes, Tacloban with the Tacloban Astrodome in the background. Photo credit: Pauline Eadie

Meanwhile in Barangay 88 in San Jose in Tacloban around 80 percent of the population have already been moved to the northern barangays and away from the coast. Barangay 88 lies on a narrow peninsula to the south of Tacloban²⁹ and was stuck by the storm surge from both sides. Around 1000 people are estimated to have died in this barangay alone. 2010 census figures indicate that Barangay 88 was the most populous barangay in Tacloban with 9,806 residents and 1,930 households³⁰ (although these figures will certainly have increased by the time Yolanda hit). Focus groups and interview respondents living in permanent housing built by Habitat for

²⁹ Daniel Z. Romualdez airport is also located on this peninsula.

³⁰ (n.a.) (2013) Population of Tacloban Rose by More Than 200 Thousand (Results from the 2010 Census on Population and Housing), Philippine Statistics Authority. Available at: <http://web0.psa.gov.ph/content/population-tacloban-city-rose-more-200-thousand-results-2010-census-population-and-housing>. Accessed 28 October 2016.

Humanity and GMA Kapuso often cited Barangay 88 as their place of origin. Tacloban City Hall is prioritising Barangay 88 as many of these survivors spent considerable periods of time in tents and temporary housing before being permanently relocated.

In Barangay Cogon, Palo, the captain indicated that only one family has been moved to permanent shelter and there are still 70 families to be moved. However, the slow process is partly due to the people's reluctance to move, especially those who are located at the coastal area. This is mainly because the location of permanent housing makes it difficult to continue their livelihoods as fishers. In Barangay Salvacion, there were still 20 households waiting to be relocated to their permanent housing. But the relocation process has been halted as the permanent shelters are prone to flooding (Interview, Captain of Barangay Salvacion). In some of the barangays, the lack of electricity in the permanent houses also prevented people from moving to the new locations.

In Tanauan, houses outside the no-build zone have been rebuilt with the assistance of the government, NGOs, international aid agencies and private companies. Tanauan was the first Yolanda hit LGU to submit a completed rehabilitation plan to the government. From the outset aid agencies in Tanauan were designated sectorial 'focal persons' assigned by the Municipal Hall to coordinate relief efforts. This system meant that the Municipal Hall was able to assign agencies to different barangays to make sure that rebuilding efforts were coordinated. Some residents were given materials to rebuild homes in-situ (e.g. from Oxfam, Green Mindanao, Philippine Energy Secretary Carlos Jericho Petilla³¹).

In Barangay Sto. Niño, about 150 families qualified for housing from UN Habitat but not all the houses could be built because residents do not have their own land. This is a prerequisite for building the houses. If land tenure is not secure, then the landowner could come along later and claim the house on his land. For those in the no-build zones in Bislig, San Roque, Sta. Cruz, and Sto. Niño, there were already designated beneficiaries for resettlement but not all of them have been transferred to the

³¹ Del Mundo, Fernando (2014) 'Leyte town Mayor Pel Tecson draws road map to recovery', *Philippines Daily Inquirer*, 9 February. Available at: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/575784/leyte-town-mayor-pel-tecson-draws-road-map-to-recovery>. Accessed 6 November 2016.

resettlement areas. Some informants reported that some resettlement areas also lack basic services like water.

Despite millions of dollars in disaster relief funding and the best efforts of a host of governmental and non-governmental relief agencies people remain in vulnerable housing with extreme exposure to the sea. Coastal dwellers have ‘bounced back’ as they have rebuilt their houses but these communities are not resilient as they are unable to mitigate future risks and remain vulnerable. Whilst the locals are cognizant of the risks that they face there is also little or nothing that they can do about it apart from getting out of harm’s way when the next typhoon comes. Barangay captains in Tacloban told us that they had no idea when alternative housing would become available for their residents and some even told us that ‘building back better’ had taken place as they had been given a new barangay hall or a baseball pitch (interview Malinao, 19 August 2016). In Tanauan, while some residents said that they have new buildings (multipurpose halls, classrooms, barangay halls, etc.) and other infrastructures like streetlights, and most of the reconstructed houses have stronger roofing materials now, those that are waiting to be resettled are still waiting for the houses to be built or processing some of the requirements, e.g. community tax certificates or public lands to be available to be used for resettlement.

Permanent Housing

In a 4 November 2015 news release the National Housing Authority (NHA) declared that ‘the government infrastructure projects in areas hit by Typhoon Yolanda on November 8, 2013 are on track’ (2015, 4 November) and that they had delivered ‘12, 635 ready for occupancy housing units and 8, 820 more housing units to be completed before the end of 2015’. They also reported that this housing would benefit from community facilities, water and power lines.

Figures given to us by Ted Jopson, City Housing and Community Development Office Tacloban indicated that, as of August 2016, 954 temporary shelters have been built by NGOs and 915 bunkhouses had been built by the NHA. The table below shows the figures for permanent housing as of August 2016:

Figure 1: Permanent Housing Completed Tacloban City, 10 August 2016

	Target Units*	Completed	Occupied	Vacant
National Housing Association	13062	13165	1028	12137
INGO/NGO Projects	15731	15794	2028	13,766

Source: City Housing and Community Development Office (*the figures for target units were given to us on 28 October 2015)

Jopson explained that the city government relocation strategy involved moving people as a bloc from the coastal barangays to permanent relocation sites. He also explained that teachers would move to new schools and stay with the same children³² (interview, November 11, 2015). However, there are a number of obstacles to this, not least the length of time that residents have been stuck in temporary accommodation and the slow and piecemeal approach to the permanent housing. Jopson outlined a number of problems with contractors including a lack of skilled craftsmen, a lack of materials, contractors selling contracts that they had been awarded to other contractors and contractors being unwilling to bid for schemes that involved building in remote areas as no allowance was given for transport costs.

Tensions have also emerged between the national and local government over the relocation of residents to incomplete housing units. The national government (the National Housing Authority) and contractors are keen to move people into nearly complete units as some vacant units have been vandalized³³. Meanwhile in an interview in November 2015 former Tacloban Mayor Alfred Romualdez noted that he was being pressured by the national government to move people to permanent housing units before a permanent water supply had been secured. He said ‘we won’t do it. I know it is election time and you (the national government) want to look good,

³² Interview Ted Jopson, City Housing and Development Office, Tacloban, 11 November 2015.

³³ Interview Vice Mayor Tacloban, Jerry Yaokasin, 31 August 2016.

but we can't do that. That's not sustainable³⁴. At the time the Nigerian government, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the Philippines Red Cross had provided funding for water provision but this funding was due to run out in early 2016³⁵. Romualdez was worried what would happen to the residents if the water supply was cut off and also feared that the local government would get the blame for the situation if they sanctioned the move. In an interview in September 2016 Robert Munoz, Tacloban City Chief Planning Officer, explained to us that Tacloban was dependent on the Leyte Metropolitan Water District. According to Munoz, the water supply comes from a source north west of Palo and half of the total water supply to Tacloban is lost from leaky pipes between Palo and Tacloban³⁶. According to Munoz the water supply to Tacloban was deliberately neglected for political reasons³⁷. There have also been a number of problems in securing suitable building lots and the downloading of funds from the national government.



³⁴ Interview Mayor Tacloban Alfred Romualdez, 11 November 2015.

³⁵ Bugnos, Ruel T. (2016) 'Ridge View Part I Welcomes 94 New Family Beneficiaries', Republic of the Philippines National Economic and Development Authority'. Available at: <http://nro8.neda.gov.ph/2016/01/16/ridge-view-park-i-welcomes-94-new-family-beneficiaries/>. Accessed 5 November 2016.

³⁶ Interview Robert Munoz, Tacloban Chief City Planner, Tacloban, 13 September 2016.

³⁷ See also: Beltran, Cito (2015) 'No water - no transfer', *The Philippine Star*, 4 September. Available at: <http://www.philstar.com/opinion/2015/09/04/1495669/no-water-no-transfer>. Accessed 5 November 2016.

The long lines for water from Tacloban City Hall delivery trucks in Habitat for Humanity Resettlement Area, Tacloban North, November 2016 (Photo Credit: Maria Ela L. Atienza)

In Palo, the housing situation is less dire than in Tacloban, due to the smaller population and the lower density per square meter. Most of the houses have been rebuilt by non-governmental agencies, such as CRS, and Oxfam. The national or local government has had very little or no role in the rebuilding process. In Palo most of the transitional houses are considered to be permanent houses, and there are no plans to further build permanent houses. This is because many of the residents of the transitional houses considered them better quality than their pre-disaster houses, as they are equipped with proper toilets and septic tanks, electricity and communal taps. Although not all houses have electricity due to the cost, they are connected to the grid. In terms of location, it is extremely difficult to convince the villagers to build away from the danger coastal zone. According to Mayor Petilla ‘it is hard to convince people to move away from the sea, even though we promised them a docking spot for their fishing boats’³⁸. This is because the new housing location is two or three kilometers from the sea which makes it inconvenient to travel to the sea. The fishermen also prefer to be close to their boats for security reasons.

In Tanauan, according to Mayor Pel Tecson ‘our single biggest strategy is to build back better. To make sure that we don’t just bring it back to the level that is was before Haiyan, what we want to do is bring it to the next level’³⁹. As of August 2016, Tecson reported that 80% of the residents designated for relocation to permanent housing had already been moved. Tecson’s track record is confirmed by Bernard Kerblat, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who has stated that ‘Mayor Pel holds the record amongst the thousands of Local Government Units affected by Typhoon Yolanda to have accomplished in record time the relocation of survivors straight from emergency shelters (tents, plastic sheeting) to permanent housing’⁴⁰.

³⁸ Interview Mayor of Palo, Remedios (Matin) Petilla, November 13, 2015.

³⁹ Interview Mayor Pel Tecson, 26 August 2016, Tanauan.

⁴⁰ Tecson, Pel (2015) *Stronger than the Storm: The Triumph of Human Spirit over the strongest typhoon ever to hit land – Super Typhoon Haiyan*, RDM Media and Consultancy; Tacloban, (cited in foreword).



**‘Hope for the Philippines’ The Peninsula – Gawad Kalinga (GK) Village, Tanauan.
Photo Credit: Pauline Eadie**

In contrast to Tacloban, Pel Tecson was keen to move residents to permanent shelters even if utilities were not connected yet to the new housing units. According to Tecson the lack of water was not a reason to hold up relocation as ‘we have installed water pumps and faucets. I always argue that the people are better off moving versus staying in the danger area as their living conditions are way, way better than before’⁴¹. However, in FGDs and interviews, some relocated people still come back daily to their original areas for work and children to study in their original schools. According to one barangay official, some of these resettled people complain that their new areas still have limited utilities and are prone to flooding.

Some NGOs and private sector groups encourage actual work, or ‘sweat equity’ in building resettlement areas as the beneficiaries’ contribution to their new homes. The Peninsula Hotel Group and Gawad Kalinga (translates to ‘give care’), a Philippine

⁴¹ Tecson, interview op.cit.

NGO that specializes in providing housing and livelihood opportunities all over the country, adopted this practice when building new homes for the residents of barangay San Roque, Tanauan in the new location of barangay Maribi⁴² (see photograph above).

In all three LGUs a number of resettlement areas have been built, mostly with non-government and international support. However not everyone has moved to these areas either because there are problems in terms of determining and awarding houses to beneficiaries or the new houses are still insufficient. In the Tacloban resettlement areas, beneficiaries complain of insufficient water and medical care, in-house toilets, electricity and the cost of the journey to their places of livelihood. However, these issues are less problematic in Palo and Tanauan as safe resettlement areas have been sourced that are not so far from the residents' original communities. In general, the new housing is much more robust than the housing in the original coastal communities. Roofs are made of solid steel and walls and floors are made of concrete. Interviews conducted in August 2016 indicated that no residents that have transferred to permanent housing have returned to their original homes. Nevertheless, some fisher folk do stay overnight in their original homes a few nights a week so that they can fish. During weekends, they return to their families in the northern barangays. Lack of livelihood options is a key concern in the resettlement areas.

Is Building Back Better Enough?

According to the 2015 report, *The Human Cost of Weather Related Disasters*, 90% of disasters over the last 20 years have been caused by weather related events⁴³. This report also states that 89% of storm related deaths 'occurred in lower income

⁴² (n.a.) (2015) 'The Peninsula Announces Completion Date for the 'Hope for the Philippines' The Peninsula - GK Village for the Families Displaced by Super Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines', The Peninsula Hotels. Available at: <http://news.peninsula.com/en/news/story/10810-the-peninsula-hotels-announces-completion-date-for-the-hope-for-the-philippines-the-peninsula-gk-village-for-families-displaced-by-super-typhoon-haiyan-in-the-philippines/>. Accessed 6 November 2016.

⁴³ *The Human Cost of Weather Related Disasters: 1995 - 2015* (2015) Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) and The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). Available at: https://www.unisdr.org/2015/docs/climatechange/COP21_WeatherDisastersReport_2015_FIN_AL.pdf. Accessed 28 November 2016.

countries, even though they experienced just 26% of all storms⁴⁴. According to this report the Philippines is the fourth most disaster-prone country in the world.

The Philippines is ranked as low-middle income country and its GDP per capita, whilst improving, lags behind other emerging and developing Asian countries⁴⁵. Significant differences in income can be seen between regions; between 2009 – 2012 Region VIII average annual income was 180,000PHP (£3,272)⁴⁶ compared to the National Capital (NCR) average of 379,000 PHP (£6,890)⁴⁷. Meanwhile 2015 figures show that the top ten percent of earners in the Philippines earned 9.1 times, 786,000PHP (£14,290.90) more than the poorest percent, with the poorest ten percent averaging an annual wage of just 86,000PHP (£1,563)⁴⁸. Between income sectors fisher folk, farmers and children are the poorest⁴⁹. Agriculture and fisheries are significant employment sectors in Region VIII. From these statistics we can see, notwithstanding unearned and unreported income, a scenario where some of the poorest sectors of Philippine society are most vulnerable to weather related disasters.

After disasters such as Yolanda, where significant housing stock is destroyed and large numbers of IDPs are generated it is essential that ‘better’ shelter be built. If survivors do not have homes that meet their physical and socio-economic needs, then the ability to successfully adapt to the changes in the situation post-disaster is compromised. In August 2015 United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Chaloka Beyani, acknowledged the immense scale of the post-Yolanda rebuilding project; however he also expressed the fear that

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁵ Schwab, Klaus and Sala-i-Martin (2014) *The Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015*, The World Economic Forum. Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport_2014-15.pdf. Accessed 28 October 2016, p. 308.

⁴⁶ Currency conversion rates are based on 55PHP to 1GBP.

⁴⁷ Bersales, Lisa Grace S. (2015) ‘PSA Renews Clearance of the 2015 Family Income and Expenditure Survey’, Philippine Statistics Authority. Available at: http://nap.psa.gov.ph/pressreleases/2015/PSA_PR-201510-PP1-04_2015FIIES.asp. Accessed 28 October 2016.

⁴⁸ Bersales, Lisa Grace S. (2016) ‘Average family Income in 2015 is Estimated at 22 Thousand Pesos Monthly (Results from the 2015 Family Income and Expenditure Survey)’, Philippine Statistics Authority. Available at: <http://psa.gov.ph/content/average-family-income-2015-estimated-22-thousand-pesos-monthly-results-2015-family-income>. 28 October 2016.

⁴⁹ Bersales, Lisa Grace S. (2016) ‘Fishermen, Farmers and Children remain the poorest basic sectors’, Philippine Statistics Authority. Available at: <https://psa.gov.ph/content/fishermen-farmers-and-children-remain-poorest-basic-sectors-0>. Accessed 28 October 2016.

‘attention and resources appear to be waning’⁵⁰. Beyani emphasised the need for durable solutions and secure futures. For Yolanda survivors the location of their homes is critical. Some communities have relocated wholesale away from vulnerable coastal areas. But whilst they may be safer from the elements they have become vulnerable to lack of access to livelihood. The new permanent shelters in Tacloban are a 45-minute jeep journey from downtown Tacloban and the coast. Whilst it is possible to commute this distance the cost is prohibitive for those already on very low wages. Despite calls for ‘in city’ relocation⁵¹ in Tacloban, such a policy has remained elusive because of a lack of available safe land.

However, resilience is also about the capacity for self-organisation or community empowerment. In order to address this issue the organisation Urban Poor Associates have extended the notion of Build Back Better to ‘People Build Back Better’. By foregrounding people in the notion of building back, the idea is to restore morale after a disaster and encourage survivors to organize and take control of regenerating their community. Many of our respondents credited the Tzu Chi organization’s ‘Cash for Work’ strategy for bringing communities together as a collective in the immediate aftermath of the disaster⁵². Tanauan Mayor Pel Tecson has advocated similar strategies. Tecson has encouraged Tanauan residents to organize themselves into livelihood associations. However, in the Tanauan FGDs, intrigues and in fighting also occur among residents as a result of jockeying for limited assistance.

However any attempts to self-organize in Yolanda affected communities are inevitably affected by the organisation of political power. The information gleaned from our family interviews was telling in this respect. One respondent commented that barangay captains have more power over residents than any other politician. This is because barangay captains have control over the compilation of lists of beneficiaries that are eligible for relocation and benefits such as the ESA. Many of

⁵⁰ (n.a.) (2015), The Philippines: UN expert urges no let up in attention to internally displaced person’ United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16282&LangID=E>. Accessed 15 November 2016.

⁵¹ Murphy, Dennis (2014) ‘Change the Strategy’, *The Daily Urban Poor*, 12 July. Available at: <http://urbanpoorassociates.blogspot.co.uk>. Accessed 15 November 2016.

⁵² Although this was not without its problems. Some barangay officials reported that some residents only turned up to collect the daily allowance and did not partake in the actual clearing work.

our respondents reported distortions in reporting as a result of perceived political allegiance. The Department of Social Welfare and Spending (DSWD) have now raised this issue at the national level. Barangay captains were responsible for identifying totally and partially damaged homes, in line with ESA requirements, although they had no clear guidelines and eligible beneficiaries were sometimes left off lists and ineligible ones included⁵³.

Barangay captains in Tacloban were initially hostile to the community organising of the Urban Poor Associates. The situation was described as ‘highly politicised’⁵⁴ as projects were implemented directly with the communities and not the barangay captain. It was claimed that over time things got easier but that the barangay captains did not want anyone questioning their strategies. The organisation of buildings within a barangay is also socially significant as those living near the barangay hall are better placed to monitor activity and access any information and benefits forthcoming. For this reason some residents were disgruntled when barangay halls were reconstructed in alternative locations, even if the new location was only a few hundred meters away. The spatial organisation of the seat of power in the barangay matters. If post-disaster communities are to become socially resilient then further checks and balances may need to be put on barangay captains and municipal/city officials. Otherwise poor practice or non-performance will continue to be evident in ‘built back communities’ either in situ or relocation sites. However such checks and balances are likely to be politically complex and practically difficult.

In Tanauan, as mentioned earlier, while the ESA was given earlier and many qualified residents were moved earlier to resettlement areas compared to other localities, there are still complaints about not everyone qualified getting the promised ESA and the favouritism given by the municipal government to select barangays whose officials are allies. At the same time, there were some residents who said that there were people who are close to or work in the Municipal Hall and are not qualified but got units in the resettlement areas. However, they acknowledge that they have better public buildings, infrastructures and housing roofs now than before.

⁵³ (n.a.) (2016) ‘Where did the Emergency Shelter Assistance for “Yolanda” survivors go?’ , Republic of the Philippines: Philippines Information Agency. Available at: <http://news.pia.gov.ph/article/view/2131478253660/where-did-the-emergency-shelter-assistance-funds-for-yolanda-survivors-go->. Accessed 15 November 2016.

⁵⁴ Torelia, op. cit.

Several barangays are also recipients of the Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM) project of CRS, a US-based NGO. Aside from donated communications and life-saving equipment turned over to the barangays, the barangay officials and residents received DRRM training and drills in preparation for any emergency. FGD participants and key informants noted that they now know what to do during typhoons and they now evacuate immediately when a typhoon is coming. Some barangays, like Salvador and San Roque, already have Disaster Plans. One common complaint though is that even with these developments, sustainable livelihood and poverty remain problems, especially for farmers who rely on coconut farming. However, the DSWD, NGOs and some aid agencies, in coordination with the municipal government, have given some livelihood training, equipment and supplies, e.g. rice seeds, pedicabs, piglets, etc. to residents, especially associations of women, fisher folks, farmers and pedicab drivers.



**The new barangay hall and evacuation centre in Barangay Bislig, Tanauan, Leyte
(Photo credit: Maria Ela L. Atienza)**



Barangay San Roque’s Assessment of its Disaster Preparedness Based on its DRMM drill conducted with the help of CRS (Photo credit: Maria Ela L. Atienza)

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

In Palo, Tacloban and Tanauan many individuals and communities still suffer from vulnerabilities. A lack of sustainable livelihood, inadequate and unsafe housing, the inadequate provision of utilities such as water and electricity and incomplete infrastructures such as roads and drainage in the resettlement areas continue to threaten the communities’ abilities to ‘build back better’. The capacity to protect themselves, their families and communities from future disasters and day-to-day safety issues remains tenuous in many cases. The withdrawal of many aid agencies also left people worse off than before as the drying up of material provision and employment prospects coincided with their exit. The sheer volume of aid that initially inundated Yolanda affected areas contributed to a dependence mentality in various communities. The rehabilitation process is now in the hands of the government, who has been widely perceived to be the least active actor in the rehabilitation process.

Instead of empowering the local people with the tools and resources to build back

better and enhance their resilience, what we have observed during the most recent fieldwork is that many communities and individuals have been much divorced from the rebuilding process, as they neither have the power to determine the locations of their new housing, nor been given adequate livelihood options to rebuild their lives. They have little control over the trajectory of their recovery, which further entrenches them in their marginalized position in the society. Resilience remains an aspiration rather than a sustainable reality. Building back better then becomes a development and disaster management concept that is separated from the participation of the local communities. In fact, the concept is rarely understood by the local people in its entirety, some even admitted that they have not even heard of the concept, apart from positively spun piecemeal doses through anecdotes of rebuilt infrastructure and temporary livelihoods.

Genuine building back better should be rights-based, with the goal of improving adaptive capacities and addressing and reducing vulnerabilities and risks. In fact, we recommend building forward instead of back, as alluded at the beginning of the paper. Resilience must be about bouncing ‘forward’ rather than bouncing ‘back’. Social resilience is about adaptation as well as rehabilitation. We observed strategies that neglected empowerment and the importance of building the capacities of individuals and their communities in order to adequately secure themselves. Different government agencies and other sectors should endeavour to collaborate with each other and work closely with international organisations for the transfer of knowledge and skills in terms of global best practices. A good example was the 15th International Symposium on New Technologies for Urban Safety of Mega Cities in Asia held in Tacloban on the 7-9 November 2016. Numerous experts on disaster management from Japan, the Philippines and other countries came together to discuss new technologies to manage major urban disasters such as flooding, storm surge and fires. In addition, these stakeholders should engage the local communities to enhance their ability to rebuild their communities, and engage them in the process of sustainably developing their security, dignity, and resilience. In the end, communities must be empowered to be able to develop suitable livelihood and resilience programs that they can truly call their own.