



# TYPHOON OF LOVE

## Rice Watch and Action Network

Climate change is affecting the lives of farmers in the Philippines today. Typhoons are more frequent, the winds are stronger, the rain is heavier, and the weather patterns in general are far more unpredictable. This makes farming an extremely difficult enterprise. And with 30% of Filipinos reliant on agriculture for their livelihoods, it is crucial that they find ways to adapt and cope with these changes.

In Sorsogon province, Rice Watch and Action Network (RWAN), one of Christian Aid's partners, is training farmers and helping them adapt to the changing conditions. It brings farmers, weather experts and local councils together in a coordinated effort to produce better crops.

### Experimenting with rice varieties

Naomi Bantawn is a mother of four boys and lives in Irosin, a town in Sorsogon province. She is taking part in an experiment in her community, growing rice that is resilient to the effects of climate change.

Every Friday, Naomi and her colleagues walk an hour to the test site. They spend the afternoon measuring the growth of their plants – counting every leaf and measuring the length of the stems. They also check what insects are on the plants and will experiment with using organic and natural pesticides. It is detailed and backbreaking work, but, as past studies have shown, it will produce better harvests in the future.

Climate Resilience Field Schools, which run the experiments, are a key initiative for RWAN. Run in different communities, these schools train farmers in farming techniques better suited to the new weather patterns. In a 16-week programme, farmers learn how to plant different varieties of rice and study their growth to find out which best suit local conditions.



Anna Jane of Christian Aid and Welsh Presbyterians Cheryl and Bethan meet Naomi in her rice study field.

RWAN closely monitors the weather, too, and sends localised weather predictions by SMS to farmers in the scheme. This enables the farmers to predict the best times to plant and harvest their crop.

As well as sending information directly to farmers' phones, RWAN updates climate information boards outside its offices daily. In the past, typhoons would destroy whole crops because they came without warning. Now, these advance warnings make it easier for the farmers to prepare.

### Lower costs bring benefits

The result of RWAN's coordination between farmers, climate experts and local officials can be seen in reduced costs of farming. Whereas a farmer might have used 100kg of seed to produce a crop, the same yield can be obtained with just 40kg – a massive reduction.

Lower costs have led to other benefits. For example, in Tongdol Barangay, farmers have built a meat shop for their community. Each member invested 500 pesos (£8.20), and they can now sell their produce to the wider community. They are also able to sell at a cheaper price to the members of the group.

This investment has meant that they have hope for their children's future. Thanks to the extra income, farmers' children are able to complete their education and there is a real possibility that the children will in time take over the management of the programme. Their future is far more secure than it would have been without RWAN's support.



## Prayer

Lord God, we thank you for our beautiful world. We are sorry that we have harmed it so much. We pray for the communities of the Philippines that are affected by climate change. Thank you for Christian Aid's partner RWAN and its work with local farmers producing more resilient forms of rice. Continue to bless their efforts, we pray. We ask especially for small farmers like Naomi, that they would see the fruits of their labours.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.



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