



TYPHOON OF LOVE

Typhoon Haiyan

Rebuilding lives in Tacloban

On 8 November 2013 one of the strongest tropical cyclones ever recorded devastated the Philippines. Typhoon Haiyan killed 6,300 people in the Philippines alone and the government estimated that 1.3 million families, or 8 million individuals, were affected in some way.

The need to rebuild lives following such a catastrophic event was clear. And with experts predicting that the frequency and severity of extreme weather events in the region will increase by 2020, due to climate change, helping to build resilience into the local population is also crucial. Already about 20 typhoons affect the Philippines every year. Not only is this number expected to rise, but also their intensity will also be much worse.

Tacloban City

Tacloban, in the province of Leyte, is a port, bounded on the east and south by water leading into the Leyte Gulf and the Pacific Ocean. This was the region most affected by the super typhoon. The city itself was hit by a storm surge at least four metres high, and local government officials believe that 90% of the city was destroyed.

Through its partner Urban Poor Associates (UPA), Christian Aid was involved in rebuilding in Tacloban. In responding to this disaster, UPA attempted to do three things: help people rebuild their livelihoods, help them find shelter for both the short and long term, and help reduce the risk of disasters in the future.

Rebuilding livelihoods

The first step in helping people affected by the typhoon to secure a sustainable livelihood was to offer them training in financial literacy. No one can take part in UPA's programmes until they have had this training.

Following the training, participants are encouraged to form savings groups of between 10 and 25 people.



Each member has to save an agreed amount on a weekly basis. From this pot, loans are made available to those within the group. Previously, people relied on loan sharks, and faced all the problems that come with such debts.

A key aspect of the programme is ensuring that there is enough food for everyone. Clusters of interested people are brought together to embark on a rice trading scheme, where they pool resources to buy rice in bulk and then sell it in their community. Urban gardens, composting, pig-raising projects and petrol trading enterprises have also been built up, providing much-needed income for their members.

An important part of this work is that communities are encouraged to help themselves, with UPA's support. Women especially have been empowered by these initiatives and are now beginning to provide leadership for their communities, whereas in the past they were far more dependent on men.

Shelter

The crucial first stage in providing support for those affected was to build temporary shelters – homes that would be solid enough to last whilst more permanent structures are being built. UPA ensured that 1,480 households benefited either from new shelters or from repair grants to their existing homes. Although they are only meant to be temporary, the shelters proved strong enough to withstand Typhoon Ruby, which hit the region in December 2014, just over a year after Typhoon Haiyan.

The second stage, which is ongoing, is to build permanent homes. One example is a new community in Tacloban,

called Pope Francis Village, which has a completion date of late 2017. UPA, one of five organisations involved with this project, will provide community engagement training for the residents, helping them to demand their rights to basic services.

Disaster risk reduction

The government initially proposed to build a large embankment between the sea and communities; residents feared this could destroy their ability to make a living from fishing. With UPA's training, they have been able to persuade the government not to go ahead with this plan.

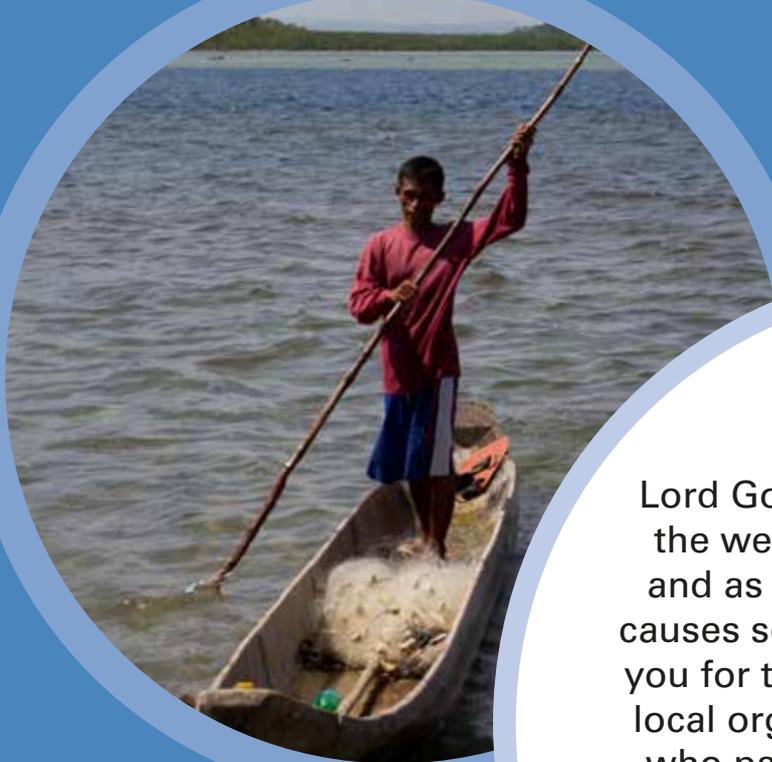
Other, more sustainable, plans are being implemented. For example, Pope Francis Village is being built with quality materials some distance away from the shore.

This has helped reduce people's fears, giving them confidence about their future.

It is not just about building better structures, however. Schemes such as the savings groups and the rice trading and other entrepreneurial projects mentioned above mean that people already feel more resilient.

Disaster risk reduction isn't just about reducing disasters, but about being more able to cope when disasters strike.

Climate change means that extreme weather patterns will become an increasing problem in the Philippines. Disasters will happen and people will be affected. However, with the help of Christian Aid and its partners, these effects can be somewhat mitigated, offering hope to the poorest communities.



Prayer

Lord God, as climate change affects the weather patterns of our world, and as the rage of fiercer typhoons causes so much destruction, we thank you for the rebuilding efforts of those local organisations in the Philippines who partner with Christian Aid. We pray that through UPA's efforts, local communities would grow in resilience and would be better able to withstand the storms of the future.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.



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