

Vulnerabilities in Relocating Residents within the Forty Meter Danger Zone After Supertyphoon Haiyan

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Abstract

This paper attempts to depict some vulnerabilities that may affect internally displaced persons (IDP) in relocating communities affected by the 40-meter danger zone after the onslaught of Supertyphoon Haiyan. On the ground sentiments of IDPs were pooled to come up with recommendations, patterned with the rights-based framework as recommended by Inter-Agency Standing Committee of the United Nations. Incorporated also in this analysis are reports from the National Government, Local Government Unit, and Non-Government Organizations.

The Philippine Government issued an announcement through the Disaster Response Operations Monitoring and Information Center (DROMIC), that some 4 million individuals were internally displaced from their homes due to the Supertyphoon Haiyan (Yolanda) in 2013. The rapid onset of the typhoon and its immediate impacts triggered mass evacuations from the period just before to, shortly after the full force of the typhoon and sea surges, hitting different communities along its path (DSWD, IOM, IDMC & SAS 2014). At the same time, during the first-four or five weeks, thousands of people moved out of the affected areas or between regions, towards neighboring urban areas.

For those who chose to stay, places of immediate emergency shelter for displaced people were designated as evacuation centers in overcrowded public or community buildings (DSWD, IOM, IDMC & SAS 2014). By the end of 2013, evacuees were ordered to return to their original communities as most of the evacuation centers set up in schools were forced to be closed to allow the resumption of classes in early January (DRONIC 2014). They were ordered to return to their original settlements, erecting temporary and makeshift shelters. As a response, bunkhouses or transitional accommodation were constructed with substandard light materials (DSWD, IOM, IDMC & SAS 2014) to those households within the 40meter no-build-zone while numerous IDPs remaining in tent cities were also being relocated to bunkhouses, waiting for resettlements to become available (DSWD, IOM, IDMC & SAS 2014).

The 40-meter no-build-zone was an issue on coastal communities that were declared unsafe for human habitation. It became an increasing controversy regarding contradictory/ inconsistent policies within and between LGUs in its implementation and uncertainties on the legal basis (DSWD, IOM, IDMC & SAS 2014). Questions about its effectiveness in achieving public safety, disproportionate impact on poorer fishing communities, that even the Commission on Human Rights promoted a rights-based approach (DSWD, IOM, IDMC & SAS 2014) to cater the human rights of the IDPs.

As a resolution, LGUs modified the "no build zone" to "no-dwelling zone" within the same 40-metre easement (DSWD, IOM, IDMC & SAS 2014). Furthermore, the National Government committed to a broader policy of relocation away from coastal areas in general. One year after, completed resettlement clusters were opened to IDP for relocation (DSWD, IOM, IDMC & SAS 2014). Even until now, continued constructions of household units were done by the National Government and other Non-Government Organization to cater the demand for relocation of IDPs to safer zones.



Legend: ★ Temporary Shelters Permanent Shelters

Figure1. Map of Tacloban City showing temporary and permanent shelter sites where displaced population were relocated upon the implementation of the 40-meter Danger Zone.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of residence as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of disasters, and; who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (UN, 2004). This was also defined by the Fifth Congress as any individual who had suffered harm as a direct result of internal displacement whether arbitrary, or not as defined herein, including in the context of natural and man-made disasters (Philippine Congress-Act Protecting the Rights of IDP, 2013). If this Act will be promulgated into a law, the Philippine Government has the duty to protect the rights of IDPs, their benefits and sanction penalties for violators (CHR, 2001). If the government is eager to relocate IDPs to safer zones, there are requisites that the United Nations recommends for implementation to give humanitarian management of IDPs. As climate change is manifested among extreme weather disturbances (though no study had directly correlated it), the magnitude of catastrophes is forthcoming and IDPs are expected to be a persisting in the Philippines.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC, 2014) Framework on Durable Solution for IDPs described a durable solution to people who have been displaced, or no longer have any specific needs linked to their displacement. The agency recommends: (1) sustainably integrate back to their place of origin (through return), (2) in the areas where they take refuge (through local integration), and (3) alternative locations elsewhere (through relocation). The framework laid out key criteria that IDPs may enjoy without discrimination on: long-term safety and security; adequate standard of living; access to employment and livelihoods; and access to effective mechanisms to restore their housing, land, and property (Sherwood et al 2014).

Key informants' interview (KII) was implored to 4 IDPs sheltering in a relocation site to elicit their views using self-made questionnaire patterned on the framework of IASC (2014). Consent forms were secured from the respondents and short orientation of the KII was given before the implementation. All of the respondents were consenting adults, head of the family and fisherfolks/vendors. Coding was used through deductive approach to formulate thematic analysis using preconceived themes based on initial interviews. All of the respondents were previously living within the 40-meter danger zone and forced to leave their settlements as they were promised with better resettlements and fear that in future typhoons, they will experience the same distress with Supertyphoon Haiyan. The LGU of Tacloban had constantly warning them to be forcedly displaced if

they will not submit for voluntary relocation. Other trade-offs such non-inclusion in shelter aid, relief goods, livelihood and other assistance lead impacted communities to submit for relocation. Residents were left to decide of the latter even without surety that they could access to the basic services and imple decency in living.

Access to employment and livelihoods

Respondents experienced difficulties in their livelihood since the typhoon, with fisherfolks and vendors who were negatively affected and unable to support the restoration of their livelihoods. Closure of local establishments, lack of employments was a major concern of the working force and further movements; would result in an increased unemployment or additional burden in case for regular fare to their workplace. NGOs and LGU, on the other hand were offering livelihood programs to IDPs such as handicraft, food delicacies, agriculture and livestock.

In the past relocation attempts, access to livelihoods was critical but an unmet concern (Sherwood et al 2014). In the absence of viable opportunities to make a living in their new communities, relocated families return to their areas of origin to continue practicing their livelihoods. Most of the IDPs in Tacloban City were fishermen and their relocation was very far from the sea. This drew them back to their original settlements where livelihood is re-established. Some NGOs supported initiation of cooperatives among IDPs. They seed in capital to start business ventures and monitor them to institute self-sustaining enterprise.

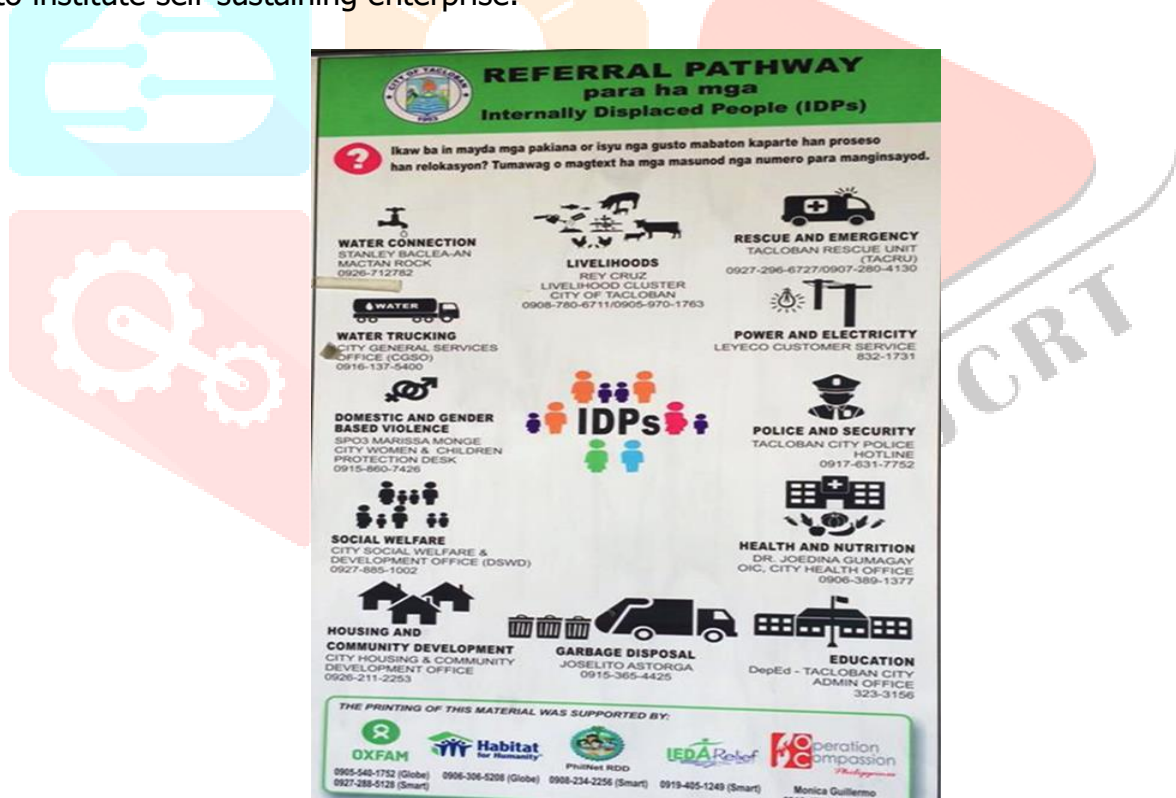


Figure2. Referral pathways of the different services by the City Government of Tacloban to IDPs in the different relocation sites. This framework is a joint project with NGOs such as OXFAM, Habitat for Humanity, PhilNet, IEDA and Operation Compassion

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

WASH related conditions have improved relative to the beginning of the emergency phase with regards to access to clean water, the number of latrines available and solid waste management. However, drainage problems have worsened due to poor drainage quality. There was no document that the Tacloban City Government showed or certificate of inspection that gone through a quality check. Though installation of drainage systems and mitigation activities had been implemented, improving these sites with functional drainage and water connections would alleviate living conditions of the IDPs. In the resettlement where respondents live, access to potable water was very problematic as they depend on periodic ration supplies by the City Government. Solid waste problems have decreased over time; as environmental hygiene promotion activities have been a major concern in the resettlement sites. Garbage collections were also regularly collected by the City Government.

Protection

Overall protection related measures in sites seem to have improved over time. The presence of on-site security- Philippine National Police and community-led peace system Barangay Tanod were very active. Access to specialized services for vulnerable groups, such as women/child-friendly spaces were non-existent resulting into a number of protection-related incidents such as: (a) sexual harassment /molestation, (b) rape/attempted rape, (c) exchange of goods/food/money for sex, (d) physical, emotional, or sexual abuse on children, (e) domestic violence, and; (f) alcohol/drug related problems. Safe spaces are vital for the protection of marginalized sectors, being a site of education, communication and counseling for victims of violations.

Health

Factors such as poor living conditions, limited availability of services like hygienic water, sanitation, nutrition and disruption of primary health care services made IDPs more vulnerable to infectious diseases and malnutrition. Access to health services including reproductive health, maternal-child care services targeting women and infants should also be prioritized. Between mid-February and the end of April, the number of breastfeeding mothers, persons with disabilities and persons with chronic diseases increased, particularly in Region VIII (DSWD, IOM, IDMC & SAS 2014). Though regional epidemiologists have not directly associated these morbidities to IDPs, susceptibility to health and illnesses disabilities were attributed as access to basic health services were inadequate. Food security will always be primal priority of the family; thus, it should be fundamental in the framework of resettlement. If there will be no jobs and economic security within the actors of the family, health and nutrition will always be a persistent problem, making food deficient on the table. Some NGOs were giving seeds for backyard gardening to bring the food basket to the household. Others were livestock such as piggery, poultry and cattle. These mechanisms will not be sustainable as it needs skill and persistent monitoring from implementing agencies.

Education

January 6, 2014 was the start of classes in all levels in the most impacted regions of Super typhoon Haiyan. Students returned to makeshift classrooms and fit-in congestions as school building were destroyed. Various NGOs supplied schools supplies, tents for temporary classrooms and materials for the reconstruction of buildings. There were no data provided by Department of Education (DepEd) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) unto the extent of student displacement as some decided to transfer and not finish the school year. More so, no data was also provided unto how many students dropped from school and the extent of recovery of enrollment as years past. In the resettlement areas, there were basic education schools that were catering students who wished to transfer. Though some opted to return to their original schools even though they were very far from

their resettlements. Students returned to classes as the implementation of the K-12 Program succeeded in transition which added 2 years Junior/Senior High School in the basic education. Parents perceived this as an additional financial burden before their students could graduate. Scholarships were also offered by NGOs, politicians, and foundations to deserving students both in the academic and technical education.

Conclusion

IDPs are very vulnerable in all aspects. Their dynamics should be monitored in terms of movements, evaluate ongoing responses and initiate patterns of resilience and positive coping strategies to access work, basic health services, education, and assistance while helping them identify protection concerns. Emphasis on the monitoring and changing displacement situations must catch critical transitions between temporary to sustainable resettlement solutions. Harmonizing response among LGUs, NGOs and the National Government using inter-agency frameworks would be beneficial for issues confronted by IDPs.

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