

Typhoon Haiyan Claims Lifetime Loss and Damages for Women in the Philippines

On 8 November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, also known as Yolanda, struck the Philippines. It brought havoc to the country and was responsible for the deaths of thousands of people and displacement of millions of the population. Typhoon Haiyan devastated the lives of many and served as a primary example of the disproportionate effects of climate change and natural disasters on women. Typhoon Haiyan is reported to have killed over 6,300 people. An estimated 64% were women. The east-central province of Leyte was at the center of the destruction. Now, barely a year later, women in the Typhoon Haiyan-struck areas are still suffering the social, financial, physical, and psychological consequences of Typhoon Haiyan every day.

Many of the women of Leyte are still living with their families in bunk houses or tent cities a year later. These shelters, supposed to be a temporary place to stay, have become their homes. The conditions of living are harsh: the incidence of hunger and poverty increase and people live with the threat of an eviction from their temporary shelters. The tent cities are very far from city centers. As a result, they live isolated and their access to jobs, services, and other urban resources are restricted. Very few buses run to and from the tent cities, and taxis are much too expensive.

Many of these women, unable to provide food for their families or find income opportunities, were

forced into trafficking to survive after the typhoon. Trafficking rates in Leyte province has increased after Haiyan.

Many women have to continue to make payments to landowners, even though their land and crops were destroyed by the typhoon. With properties and livelihoods swept away, and recovery opportunities out of reach, the women are struggling to feed their families. One of the women in the province testified, "We don't have food to eat for 5 days. My children are crying, begging for food. We eat whatever we see on the road...whether it is edible or not just to survive."

The high number of fatalities and the overall trauma of the event have had lasting psychological effects on the women of the Leyte province. Many report suffering from the aftereffects of the disaster, and continue to suffer as the lasting traumas of the typhoon continue. No adequate psychological service is provided.

Climate change is increasing the frequency and strength of natural disasters. As Typhoon Haiyan showed, it is often the most vulnerable members of the most vulnerable societies who suffer most.



International Recommendations

- Commit to a radical and urgent transition from extractive, profit based economies to people centered models that are just, equitable, gender-sensitive and locally driven;
- Commit to a comprehensive, ambitious and binding new climate agreement which aims to limit global warming below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels;
- **Mitigation:** the new agreement should target the elimination of all fossil fuels and the use of 100% renewable energy by 2030 for developed countries and 2050 for others;
- **Mitigation** should not include commercializing of the climate through mechanisms that have failed to reduce emissions including REDD, REDD+, and "climate-smart" agriculture, among others;
- **Adaptation:** Developing countries needs (particularly LDCs and SIDS) should be addressed as a priority in the new agreement. Developed countries must recognize their historical responsibilities and fulfill their obligation to support adaption measures for developing countries, including through finance, technology transfer, capacity building and the removal of patent and intellectual property restrictions;
- **Loss and damage** must address long term and slow onset loss and damage as well as immediate disaster related damage;
- **Support small-scale, locally owned and developed ecological responses** ensuring food sovereignty and traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous and rural women are retained and promoted;
- **Decision-making processes at the local, national and international levels:** Should be led by those most affected by the impacts of climate change, particularly women;
- **Disaster Risk Reduction:** A gender-responsive approach should be integrated in all disaster risk reduction strategies, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction policies and measures;
- **Accountability mechanism:** A strong and effective compliance mechanism to the agreement should be established to ensure the fulfillment of Parties' obligations.

National recommendations

- **Collaboration and consultation with the communities most affected by disaster, especially women,** in developing gender responsive policies on disaster management strategies, including preparedness, mitigation and rehabilitation, should be established;
- **Gender specific policies** that provide the most affected women by natural disasters with alternative, sustainable and locally owned livelihood options should be developed with the women in the local communities;
- Government should give full and direct access to disaster funds to the communities impacted and an accountability mechanism should be established to ensure that resources are distributed and utilized for the communities victims of natural disasters, including women.

Philippines Country Info

Population: Estimated at 100.5 million (2014)

Human Development Index Ranking: Ranked 117 on Human Development Index of 187

Greenhouse Gas Emissions: As of 2013, the Philippines was responsible for 0.27% of global greenhouse gas emissions and has a per rate of 0.87 metric tons (as compared to 17.5 metric tons for the US, and 6.18 metric tons for China).

Climate Change Vulnerability: The Philippines is extremely vulnerable to climate change. Climate change is expected to limit freshwater supplies, cause massive forest die-offs, and amplify coastal erosion. Changing rain patterns and warmer temperatures are expected to reduce agricultural production, increase malnutrition, and cause a surge in the spread of waterborne diseases.

Costs of climate change: Haiyan highlighted the high material costs of climate change which are expected to grow in the future. The devastation brought by Haiyan to the country is estimated to reach USD 1.6 billion in total.



Community Info

- Leyte province is the 15th most densely populated province in the Philippines, located in the east central part of the archipelago.
- Population: Approx 1,568,000 (2010 Census)
- Economy primarily dependent on agriculture, fishing, industrial, energy and mining.
- The capital of Leyte Province is Tacloban City, one of the worst affected areas hit by Typhoon Haiyan. A majority of more than 6,000 deaths were recorded from Tacloban City.
- Education and employment opportunities are very limited for women in Leyte Province.
- A majority of Leyte's rural women engage in agricultural work varying from planting rice, vegetable and coconuts.
- Land ownership very restricted for women- only 30% of land rights are held by women.

Organisation Info

Amihan Federation of Peasant Women is leading research on the gender-specific impacts of Typhoon Haiyan. Their research addresses the cultural and social norms and the lack of gender-sensitive policies that effect women's vulnerability to natural disasters and other negative impacts of climate change. AMIHAN aims to build the influence and capacity of local women's movements throughout the Philippines.



Climate Justice is a Feminist Issue

APWLD is Asia Pacific's leading feminist, membership driven network. We hold consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Our 180 members represent groups of diverse women from 25 countries in the region. For 25 years APWLD has been empowering women to use law as a instrument of change for equality, justice, peace and development. We use research, training, advocacy and activism to claim and strengthen women's human rights.

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
189/3 Changklan Road, Amphoe Muang, Chiang Mai 50100,
Thailand

Tel: (66) 53 284527, 53 284856

Fax: (66) 53 280847

Skype: apwldsec

Email: apwld@apwld.org

Website: www.apwld.org

