Briefing

iied **URBAN CRISES**

Policy pointers

To avoid being overwhelmed by an influx of humanitarian and media actors following large-scale emergencies, local governments must increase their capacity to coordinate and communicate with them.

National government should support local government capacity in the immediate emergency response stage and provide leadership, guidelines, training and budgetary support for recovery projects.

Local government would also benefit from improved support for project management and monitoring of ongoing recovery projects. Tacloban needs to ensure it has the capacity — particularly around social preparation and community organisation — to implement the Tacloban North resettlement site.

Humanitarian organisations should invest in engaging with local government, particularly in urban programmes, to set the stage for forming productive partnerships.

Typhoon Haiyan: lessons for urban disaster response and recovery

In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, the strongest ever to make landfall, devastated the Philippine city of Tacloban. Despite being crippled by the storm, the local government strove to coordinate recovery efforts towards a better, more resilient Tacloban. This briefing examines the challenges the city government faced, first in the immediate humanitarian response and later during the recovery and rehabilitation phases.[1] Drawing on these experiences, it makes recommendations for local and national government and humanitarian agencies to improve their capacity for a more coordinated, efficient and sustainable response to future disasters. The briefing also offers a snapshot of how the city government has implemented lessons learnt from Typhoon Haiyan with positive effect.

Emergency response

After Typhoon Haiyan, the Tacloban city government faced a number of challenges. In the immediate aftermath of the storm, its overstretched staff struggled to deal with the influx of humanitarian and media workers while coordinating different national and international bodies.

Within days, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) had declared a Level 3 response, triggering the highest level of humanitarian response and a surge of foreign humanitarian expertise into the city.[2] Mechanisms such as the cluster system (Box 1), national and regional government task forces, and the city-led Tindog Tacloban Task Force were quickly set up to coordinate the emergency response. The latter aimed to "coordinate the needs of the public and optimise the communication between the national government and the different international organisations with the local government."[3]

The national government had an established relationship with local representatives from the UN and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). But the city government, unused to dealing with them, was overwhelmed by the influx of humanitarian organisations and the constant requests for data from NGOs and the media. Similarly, the NGOs were unfamiliar with the local government system. Some expressed frustration about coordinating with the Tacloban city government, not knowing who to talk to, or being ignored.

Local government departments and staff also had varying levels of capacity to deal with the situation. As a result, the government and NGOs tended to work in parallel during the emergency response stage — rather than follow the integrated, cluster approach institutionalised in 2007 under the legal framework of the Philippine disaster management law (Box 1). Coordination was not consistent because the local government officials involved in the task force had other responsibilities related to relief and response activities. Although city staff were working directly with their national government counterparts, politics strained the relationship, hampering open coordination between the national and local government, and with provincial government.

Recovery and rehabilitation

The task forces formed in the emergency response phase were dissolved as the city normalised and addressed its initial needs,

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Box 1. What is the cluster system?

The cluster system is an established humanitarian methodology whereby groups of UN and non-UN humanitarian actors work together in the main sectors — such as shelter, health and water — for which there are clear needs. The cluster system enables single points of contact, can foster partnerships in the response and provides support to the national agencies coordinating the response.[4] The Philippines was one of the first countries to adopt a cluster approach in 2007 and the Filipino Government leads eight clusters, supported by the relevant cluster lead agency.[5] Clusters are operating at both the national and sub-national levels and there is a Humanitarian Country Team.

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though the clusters continued for a year. But with this transition from humanitarian response to recovery and development came new challenges.

UN-Habitat helped the city develop a recovery plan and the national government created the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Recovery and Rehabilitation to lead recovery planning. The Tacloban Recovery and Sustainable Development Group (TACDEV), led by the city government in partnership with UN-Habitat, was formed in December 2013.

A multi-actor group including key government agencies and city stakeholders, TACDEV used a participatory process to formulate the Tacloban Recovery and Rehabilitation Plan (TRRP). This plan identified immediate actions and operational strategies towards Tacloban's recovery, rehabilitation and sustainable development after Typhoon Haiyan. At the time of writing, multiple sources had provided about 30 per cent of the estimated cost of proposed projects. The funding to date has come mainly from national government, but also NGOs.

The TRRP was envisioned as a living document, to be updated as new information, challenges and opportunities arose. A project monitoring check from March 2015 showed that the plan now had additional projects and the estimated project cost had increased from Php25 billion to Php38 billion (US$565 million to US$860 million).

Funding and challenges ahead. The TRRP has three key areas of concern for rehabilitation:

1. Infrastructure. With an estimated cost of Php14 billion, the TRRP's biggest proposed investment area was for the repair of public infrastructure, including the city airport. Although this represents 37 per cent of total proposed investments in the TRRP, only 18 per cent of the required funding has been received. Most of the projects under implementation are those under the Department of Public Works and Highways.

2. Economic development and livelihoods. The second-biggest proposed investment area at Php13 billion, it was meant to provide loan assistance to affected businesses and livelihood assistance to various groups. But only one per cent of this funding has been allocated (about Php125 million), mainly to agriculture and fisheries.

3. Shelter. The third biggest area of proposed funding (Php9.4 billion), shelter covers land acquisition, site development and building costs. Of all key result areas, it has so far received the biggest share of total TRRP funding at 73 per cent, mainly due to the national government's housing programme. Shelter has already received 91 per cent of its proposed funding, but is one of the slowest moving areas in terms of implementation: only seven per cent of target new housing for affected households had been completed in the first quarter of 2016.

The main rehabilitation concern now is housing for affected coastal communities. Many challenges remain, especially in establishing the new city extension, which is the main task of the Tacloban North Technical Working Group.

Local revenue generation and budgeting remain a concern. Of the 5,464 established businesses in the city in 2013, only 3,538 renewed their business permits in 2014. To encourage businesses to resume operations, the city's legislative council passed ordinances condoning penalties on delinquent properties (with unpaid taxes) and business permits (not renewed on time), and suspended all ordinances increasing the rate of taxes and fees under Revenue Code of Tacloban.

The city is highly dependent on outside sources for its recovery and rehabilitation. With the bulk of its own budget devoted to professional services, maintenance and operating expenses, the local government has to be creative and strategic in tapping resources. One strategy is partnering with organisations that provide counterpart funds. For example, the city spent Php50 million buying land on which NGOs and the national government could build temporary shelters.

Efficiency and sustainability

Recommendations for a more effective emergency response. Based on the experience of Tacloban and interviews with stakeholders involved in the city's immediate emergency response, the study this briefing is based on[1] makes the following recommendations for the national and local government and international humanitarian actors. Whilst these are specific to Tacloban, they would also be relevant more broadly in other urban humanitarian responses in the Philippines and elsewhere.

National government should:

1. Build the capacity of the Office of Civil Defence, key national agencies (designated as cluster leads), and local disaster risk reduction and management offices to take the lead role in coordination. This should include:

 a. training on the international humanitarian architecture and cluster system

 b. developing leader-managers with skills to lead and facilitate coordination meetings

 c. developing a strong secretariat to serve as focal point for registration, and

 d. improving information management, including mapping of humanitarian assistance.

2. Explore how to increase local government capacity at different stages of the response following a disaster. The emergency phase may require emergency managers for debris removal, relief distribution and medical response; while the recovery phase may require technical experts, project managers and communication specialists. Options could include providing funds for local government to hire dedicated emergency coordination and planning staff, or forming a surge or emergency management team to support a city during the response phase.

3. Provide guidance and protocols for local governments to deal with humanitarian organisations. This could include national policies and standards and local protocols to speed up humanitarian assistance, such as streamlining local permit approval.

4. Develop a guidance note for humanitarian organisations working with local authorities, which could include identifying local, provincial and national registration or coordination points.

Local government should:

1. Work with national government to strengthen the capacity of local disaster risk reduction and management offices (see point 1 for national government), targeting members of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (likely to be department heads) and middle management, to ensure there are enough people with technical knowledge and authority to coordinate a response.

2. Involve the private sector in the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council and include them in contingency planning so they can ready their resources if needed.

3. Enhance inter-local governmental cooperation in emergency response by planning with other cities and municipalities to complement each others' resources when there is a region-wide disaster. This could mean sending relief or response teams

or individuals to support specific offices where personnel have been affected.

Humanitarian organisations should:

1. Invest resources in engaging with local government, particularly in urban programmes. Early engagement helps form relationships and sets the stage for productive partnerships. This could include assigning a specific person who understands local dynamics to act as liaison, or providing organisational support and technical assistance alongside direct humanitarian assistance to build local emergency response capacity.

Recommendations for a more effective, sustainable recovery. Based on the challenges facing Tacloban in its longer-term recovery, our working paper makes recommendations for national government so they can support cities that are recovering from disasters, and recommendations specifically for the Tacloban city government.[1]

National government should:

1. Improve support for monitoring the implementation of ongoing recovery projects. This includes setting aside a budget to pay the necessary staff who are externally funded and showing leadership to resolve issues with concerned agencies.

2. Sustain coordination with local governments to ensure projects are completed. For Tacloban, this includes the development of Tacloban North and continued support for families in transition.

3. Provide enough support for national-level ad hoc bodies or coordinating mechanisms for recovery planning. This should include strong leadership, good secretariat and technical support, and capacity for information management.

4. Issue guidelines on how it will approve and implement recovery funding for local projects, along with details of the scope and level of detail it expects from recovery plans. This will allow local governments to tailor plans as necessary.

5. Explore options for transferring funds to local government for the implementation of recovery plans, including a budget to increase project management capacity. To ensure projects are implemented well, there needs to be trust and open communication unhindered by politics as well as controls (such as performance monitoring).

6. Consider flexible recovery funding. With Tacloban's recovery plan drawn up quickly, it was inevitable that some aspects would lack detail. Some interventions — such as the permanent shelter programme — have a one-size-fits-all

approach. Flexible funds would allow for more choice and variety.

7. Improve planning and budgeting for transitional housing, while permanent housing is being rebuilt. Tacloban needed more temporary options to resettle families, but the city lacked the resources to do this on a massive scale. Settling families in more durable transitional housing (that lasts at least three years) would give local governments more time (a year) to plan for permanent housing and allow them to use more participatory methods.

8. Support businesses through loans with reduced collateral requirements during disasters, especially when there is large-scale damage to properties.

The way forward for Tacloban

Tacloban has demonstrated that it has learnt from the experience of Typhoon Haiyan to improve its disaster preparedness (Box 2). But looking ahead, Tacloban's local government would still benefit from improved support either from national government or NGOs for managing and monitoring the implementation of ongoing recovery projects. Although coordination mechanisms already exist, the city needs to increase its information management capacity to provide a complete picture of the status of all the projects.

The city government must ensure it has the capacity to implement the Tacloban North resettlement site, particularly when it comes to social preparation and community organisation. It will need continued technical support for detailed planning of the whole area. To this end, it should strengthen capacity in its planning office for leadership, information management, mapping and detailed urban planning. More generally, the city government needs to improve the competencies, skills and knowledge of city staff to implement city plans. It needs to evaluate the capacity of each department, based on the role it will play in achieving the goals of the city development plans.

More effective use of hazard prediction: the national government predicted storm surges during Haiyan, but the information was largely misunderstood by local residents and potential scenarios were not communicated well enough. Despite national government storm warnings, the public and local government could not imagine the magnitude of the storm because they had lived through destructive events before. The storm surge hazard map that Tacloban had in 2013 did

Box 2. Applying lessons

When Typhoon Ruby (known locally as Typhoon Hagupit) struck the Philippines in December 2014, Tacloban was much better prepared. Although it was not hit directly this time, the city showed that it had learnt some key lessons in disaster preparedness.

not accurately predict the flooding that took place during Haiyan.

- During Typhoon Ruby, Project NOAH (Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards), a national government-funded initiative, issued storm surge warnings showing not only the height of the waves but how far inland the flooding would reach, based on updated maps of coastal communities. This tool continues to operate.

Evacuation plans: Tacloban City Council has enacted an ordinance to conduct pre-emptive and forced evacuation in the case of potential massive disasters. As a regional centre, the city's daytime population is about five times the size of its resident population.

- The mayor suspended all work and classes three days before Typhoon Ruby hit, allowing those who study and work in the city to return to their hometowns

- Vehicles parked in the downtown area during Haiyan were swept by the surge, blocking roads and damaging buildings. During Typhoon Ruby, all vehicles were moved to higher ground in designated parking areas

- City government employees were asked to ensure their families were safe in advance of Typhoon Ruby, so they could be on call in City Hall when the typhoon struck.

Improved preparedness: the city council has put a resolution to make a permanent City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office on its agenda, and is in the process of updating the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan.

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Notes

[1] This briefing draws on a longer working paper: Paragas *et al.* (2016) Tacloban after Haiyan: working together towards recovery. IIED, London. /
[2] The IASC is the primary mechanism for inter-agency communication of humanitarian assistance. It involves key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners. / [3] Tacloban City Disaster Risk and Reduction Management Committee (CDRRMC). Resolution No 05, Series of 2013. /
[4] www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/cluster-coordination / [5] Scriven, K (2013) *The Philippines: understanding humanitarian networks*, ALNAP case study.

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