



DRR AND CCA IN THE PHILIPPINES

Promoting women's participation
and leadership



OXFAM

DRR AND CCA IN THE PHILIPPINES

1 Overview

Programme information

Name	Women's Increased Resilience and Empowerment against Disasters (WIRED) and Empowering Poor Women and Men in Building Resilient and Adaptive Communities in Mindanao (EMBRACE)
Country	Philippines
Budget	£710,000
Start Date	April 2015
End Date	March 2019
Donors	Projects Direct (Oxfam)

Problem analysis

The Philippines is the fourth most disaster-prone country in the world¹ and is frequently visited by storms, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, flash floods and sea-level rise. In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan made global headlines as the strongest typhoon to ever hit land. Tragically, it caused devastation in 44 of the country's 80 provinces, affecting more than 16 million people.

El Niño, exacerbated by climate change, creates new challenges for farmers. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, the 2015–2016 El Niño caused \$325m worth of damage and production losses in crops.

Climate change impacts also worsen existing gender inequalities because when disaster strikes, women find themselves working even harder on domestic responsibilities. This takes them away from work that could enhance their livelihoods through participation in the economy.

In rural settings, social norms already limit women's participation in decision making. They have limited access to education and training and fewer opportunities to earn an income. They also face considerable barriers when it comes to property ownership. As they are routinely excluded from decision making processes, it is impossible for them to design solutions that could improve their situation.

Social norms require women to carry the burden of child rearing and household chores, and when disasters strike they care for sick family members while also helping to make ends meet, despite dealing with the loss of household assets or having to walk further to collect water.

It is not only climate change impacts that make people vulnerable. Many of the country's poorest people live in the island group of Mindanao, which is also affected by a four-decade-old armed conflict. As of 2016, 10 of the 20 poorest provinces of the Philippines are in Mindanao, according to the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC).² The population is exposed to appallingly high levels of violence, acute poverty, food insecurity and a lack of basic social services.

The national government has now passed two acts to help vulnerable people: the Climate Change Act of 2009 and the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010, both acts for which Oxfam and NGO allies lobbied. Although these laws represent a significant advancement and are forward-looking, their implementation still needs to be enhanced.

Brief programme description

Oxfam has been working in the Philippines since the 1980s. As well as lobbying for the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, Oxfam also pushed for the People's Survival Fund created in 2012. The fund created a government budget for climate adaptation actions that can be accessed by both local government units (LGUs) and non-government organizations. So far, two municipal governments – both part of an Oxfam programme – have received funding totalling approximately £2m.

Oxfam's climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) programme in the Philippines focuses on conflict-prone and climate change-sensitive areas, as well as areas affected by Typhoon Haiyan in Mindanao.

The programme aims to help poor women, men and their communities become more resilient to the impacts of climate change. This includes enhancing their well-being and emotional resilience to the shocks, stresses and uncertainties of everyday life.

The programme hopes to achieve this by helping community members and local and national government to prepare for disasters, and by encouraging government to secure investment and support from the private sector. This approach will involve addressing and shifting power relations at three levels:

- **Between rights holders and duty-bearers** – by using social accountability mechanisms and helping community members develop the knowledge, skills and capacity they need to hold local government units to account.
- **Between men and women** – by increasing women's access to information, resources and opportunities; developing their capacities; helping them gain access to economic and decision making spaces; and by reducing their disproportionate care responsibilities.
- **Between markets and small farmers** – by helping men and women farmers engage with the private sector and push for risk-transfer mechanisms, such as micro-insurance schemes.

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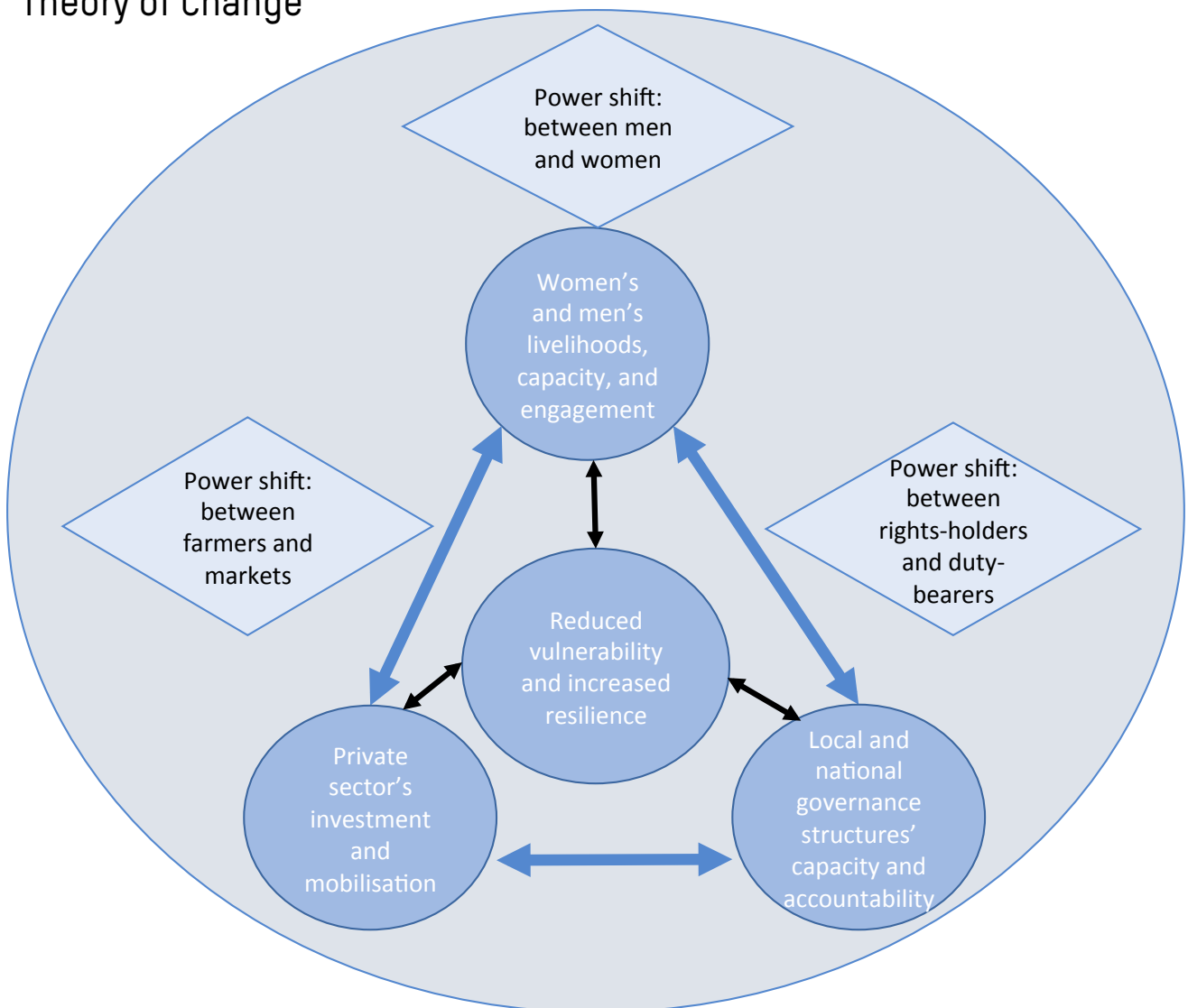
This approach will use six key strategies:

- Participatory risk assessments.
- Community mobilization for DRR and CCA planning and implementation of adaptation measures.
- Capacity building for local communities and institutions.
- Advancement of ecologically sound, women-inclusive and climate-sensitive livelihood interventions.

- Governance and policy advocacy, by investing in networking with coalitions and alliance-building.
- Developing and sharing knowledge and learning.

The programme aims to reach 7,000 individuals by March 2019, 60 percent of whom will be women.

Theory of Change



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2 Achievements and challenges

Achievements to date

The programme has brought about significant changes at several different levels. At the farm and household level, men and women farmers have managed to adopt climate-adaptive farming systems, thanks to two key factors:

- The programme has helped them understand the impacts of climate change on their livelihoods.
- Support and training has helped them adopt environmentally friendly, climate-adaptive farming techniques.

Interestingly, a recent external evaluation³ found that even communities who were not part of the programme have shown impressive knowledge gains. Of course this is partly thanks to duty-bearers focusing on awareness-raising, but it also shows the relevance and validity of the programme's participatory strategy and its multiplier effect.

Looking at the households involved in the programme, the evaluation confirmed a substantial increase in those categorized as 'low vulnerability': from 14.5 percent at baseline to 36 percent at endline. Households categorized as having 'moderate vulnerability' reduced, from 78.5 percent at baseline to 64 percent at endline.⁴

Focus group discussions also suggested the programme has improved social relations and community participation, boosting people's self-confidence and self-esteem. The effect was particularly noticeable among women.

The programme is also reducing barriers to women's and girls' leadership and participation by tackling the issue of unpaid care work. Specifically, it is identifying priority activities that will address the recognition, reduction, redistribution and representation of care work.

The programme has worked with duty-bearers in local and national government, trying to make them more accountable for CCA. The programme has ensured the active participation of LGUs in capacity building activities, enabling them to develop their DRR and CCA plans and access the People's Survival Fund.

All 10 partner LGUs have created DRR management plans, and are currently working towards their plans being financed and implemented. Furthermore, LGUs demonstrated preparedness and responsiveness by undertaking mitigation measures, and a considerable number of adaptive programs and projects have now been implemented. Thanks to capacity building support offered by the programme, 13 local governments have submitted a total of \$1.92m worth of adaptation proposals to the government's People Survival's Fund.

Through this two-pronged approach of working with community members and LGUs, the programme has also successfully introduced a social accountability component, which makes LGUs more accountable for CCA-DRR planning, budgeting, resource allocation, implementation and integration of community feedback.

Specific challenges

A key challenge affecting implementation was that the programme design assumed no major disasters would hit programme sites. Unfortunately, El Niño severely affected programme locations between October 2015 and June 2016, which led to some water sources drying up and rice and corn harvests failing. This meant the programme had to swiftly shift focus from development to humanitarian response. However, some aspects of the original programme design could be adapted. For example, through the use of early warning mechanisms, partner LGUs were able to conduct a massive information campaign at the community level to help communities select and plant crops that could survive in dry conditions. In April 2016, Oxfam and partners also mobilized community members affected by El Niño to participate in high-level policy discussions. These talks raised decision makers' awareness of the serious social and economic repercussions of El Niño at community level, and outlined the need for robust government actions on risk mitigation and disaster recovery.

Lessons learned

Developing the capacity of local authorities helps secure positive changes for both programme and non-programme communities.

Building trust with local authorities and communities requires long-term engagement.

Addressing care work in DRR programmes helps develop women's and girls' leadership.

Flexibility in adjusting strategies and implementation plans to respond to fast-changing contexts ensures that Oxfam's response remains relevant, while also boosting local people's ownership of the programme.

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3 Partnerships and links with other programmes

Partnerships

Oxfam and NGO partners work closely with LGUs, ensuring they are focusing on capacity building activities, risk assessments, CCA and risk reduction planning.

A central piece of learning that has been reaffirmed by the programme is the importance of building partnerships that are based on trust. Often this trust existed because the relationship had lasted more than five years, and also because Oxfam has been consistently responsive to issues raised during monitoring and review meetings.

As for collaboration with LGUs, the programme has demonstrated the value of two key things: adopting a positive engagement approach with local duty-bearers, and using alternative influencing strategies. Partner NGOs secured buy-in at the very outset and formalized agreement through a memorandum of agreement, which also outlined the role and commitment of LGUs and partner NGOs. This collaboration set the stage, demonstrating LGU capacity to mainstream CCA-DRR in planning and programming. It also showed how local government needed to invest in, and be accountable for, this area. It has since led to closer collaboration between LGUs and relevant national agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture.

Finally, in terms of expanding the partner base, the programme recognized the need to involve academia in two key areas for increased scale and impact:

- Research and development interventions for knowledge production.
- Generating evidence for programmes and influencing campaigns.

Links with other Oxfam programmes

The programme is aligned with Oxfam's country strategy in the Philippines and has clear links to policy, advocacy, campaigning and communications work at national and global levels. Learning from the programme is proving helpful beyond the Philippines. Other Asian countries such as Nepal and Vietnam are financing CCA at a national level, and this programme demonstrates how such financing could be used at the community level.

Innovation

With extreme weather conditions sadly becoming the norm in the Philippines, farming techniques traditionally used in the past are no longer suitable for the current climate.

The programme therefore wanted to help farmers overcome the challenges of erratic weather and by sending them timely information on the weather. Using text messages, Oxfam sent farmers weather forecasts and advised them on the best times to plant seeds and harvest crops. Using forecasts from the Automated Weather Systems, the app sends text messages to farmers whenever extreme weather events are forecast.

It is the first time Oxfam has used information and communications technology (ICT) at community level for CCA, and results have been promising.

The pilot was tested in 2016 on 18 people over a couple of months. Assessment showed SMS-based information was being disseminated and therefore giving people a vital early warning. Following the success of the pilot, the system will now be rolled out to four other LGUs for use in their communities.

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4 In focus

Promoting women's participation and leadership in DRR and CCA

Gender analysis conducted during the programme showed that even though climate change exacerbates gender inequalities, the issue is not tackled by LGU interventions.

The programme also recognized that women have an important role to play in DRR and CCA and that addressing the challenges women and girls face during emergencies would enable them to get properly involved, boosting their empowerment and leadership in the long term.

As well as focusing on women's participation in the heat of a crisis, the programme has also developed a project that focuses on women's leadership before and after a disaster.

The Women Increased Resilience and Empowered against Disasters (WIRED) project aimed to empower women and girls by doing several key things:

- Building their confidence to lead and participate in governance for disaster resilience.
- Enabling them to develop resilient agricultural livelihoods.
- Improving their capacity to address reproductive and sexual health problems, especially during emergencies.
- Reducing barriers (particularly care work) to women's and girls' leadership and participation.
- Improving practices towards resilient livelihoods and more equal economic relations.

WIRED uses the '*bibingka* approach' – addressing problems simultaneously at policy and operational levels. This approach is better known as 'top-down and bottom-up'. The approach encourages women to systematically express their concerns on risks and impacts of DRR and management, so the specific issues they face can be addressed with proper solutions.

It also addresses gender inequalities through transformative leadership, and it builds on indigenous knowledge and skills to achieve the desired results. The project focuses heavily on care work, recognizing it as one of the main barriers to women's and girls' leadership – something that is often neglected in many DRR and development programmes.

WIRED's approach also allows women's and girls' intergenerational concerns to be explored and expressed, while encouraging partnerships that bring together stakeholders from diverse organizations, including profit institutions, civil society actors and academia.

WIRED has been successful in several key ways. It has:

- Strengthened grassroots women's groups for economic, health and leadership capacities.
- Developed the capacity of duty-bearers on mainstreaming gender in DRR and CCA.
- Strengthened maternal care and childcare.
- Reduced the care burden, by building laundry facilities, improving water systems and distributing equipment that reduces labour and saves time.

The project has also successfully supported KAKASA, a women's rights organization, providing training on skills, business development and DRR management processes. Its women-to-women learning method of empowering women in the community has been recognized by the LGU, which gave them a seat on the LGU committee. This is particularly impressive – KAKASA is the only civil society organization to have one.

Several factors have contributed to this success. Partnering with an organization that is perceived as an expert in DRR and CCA, while strengthening self-help groups, has built trust with targeted communities.

The programme secured buy-in and ownership in two key ways – by developing local talent and by collaborating with people who were already familiar with intervention locations and understood communities' power structures.

Finally, Oxfam's flexibility in adjusting strategies and implementation plans to suit fast-changing contexts meant the intervention addressed priorities that mattered most to local communities, therefore bringing about change they really yearned for.

In its next phase, the programme will continue to strengthen production by introducing a climate-adaptive farming system, rolling out social accountability mechanisms and promoting interventions that reduce the care burden for women. The programme will also invest in capturing learning and making sure this feeds into campaigning work while developing strategies to ensure the approaches introduced by the programme are sustainable after Oxfam's exit.

For further information about this programme:
www.oxfam.org.uk/philippines-resilience

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Notes

¹ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2015). *The Human Cost of Weather Related Disasters 1995–2015*. Retrieved from <https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/46796>

² Shahani, L.R. (2011). *Can We Beat Poverty?* Office of the President of the Philippines: National Anti-Poverty Commission. Retrieved from <http://www.napc.gov.ph/articles/can-we-beat-poverty>

³ Cabaraban, M. (2014). *Strengthening Resiliency and Adaptation to Climate Change (An Endline Assessment): A report submitted to Oxfam Mindanao for BINDS Project*.

⁴ Ibid, table 11.

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