Linking Post-Disaster Recovery to Development

Experiences from Typhoon Yolanda Recovery in the Philippines

Typhoon Yolanda (internationally known as Typhoon Haiyan), a Category 5 typhoon, made landfall in the Philippines on 8 November 2013 and affected more than 16 million people. The post-Yolanda emergency response phase has since gradually transitioned to early recovery and further to long-term reconstruction. Recognizing that the full recovery and reconstruction from a disaster of this scale takes years and requires a long-term commitment, the Government of the Philippines led a series of strategic actions starting from the assessment of damage and losses to inform the planning and budgeting of the recovery plan to the implementation and monitoring of the plan to set the stage for a long-term successful recovery. These actions aimed at seizing the opportunity provided by the recovery process to address the underlying factors of vulnerability, strengthen resilience, and achieve higher development outcomes for the affected areas of Visayas, which even before the typhoon, was facing critical development challenges.

It is important to capture the lessons learned in formulating and carrying out the recovery as well as the efforts to link recovery to development. The earlier stages of assessment and planning, being more process-oriented and time-consuming, often remain invisible and therefore are not effectively documented and communicated. More importantly, Typhoon Yolanda is unfortunately not the last disaster that countries in Asia and the Pacific will face in the near future. Hence, documenting and learning from such processes—assessment, planning, and implementation—will be of great value to other countries in the region and their development partners.

ASSESSMENT

Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda: Build Back Better (RAY-BBB). The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) led the preliminary assessment of damage and losses, which took a mere 6 weeks. It estimated $12.9 billion worth of damage and losses, 90% of which was borne by the private sector. The assessment also identified principles to guide recovery and prioritized "build back better," which formed the basis for the allocation of the 2013 supplementary budget and forward projections up to 2016.

Postdisaster needs assessment (PDNA). Led by the Office of Civil Defense, the PDNA was completed in April 2014. It adopted a bottom–up approach, seeking feedback from affected local government units and communities on priority recovery needs.

Support leadership of assigned government oversight agency with understanding disaster damage and losses in the context of development priorities of affected areas.

The Government of the Philippines tasked NEDA, in its capacity as the vice-chair of the thematic area of disaster recovery and rehabilitation under the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act and its involvement in the country's broader development planning process, to lead the development of RAY-BBB. NEDA's expertise in development planning helped overcome assessment-related challenges, such as lack of baseline data of sector agencies and development partners. Importantly, it ensured that the recovery principles recommended by RAY-BBB are closely aligned with the broader development goals of the Yolanda-affected areas.

Coordinate closely with oversight and sector agencies, local government units, and development partners.

NEDA's leadership and the support provided by 200 specialists from different government agencies and development partners augmented

the collective ownership of the assessment results. It also helped the development partners better understand the needs on the ground and design future support accordingly.

Carry out quick but robust assessment to inform budget deliberation and leverage external financing.

The broad principles of internationally accepted damage and loss assessment methodologies were adopted to carry out RAY-BBB, but they were suitably adapted to the local context. This contributed to the robustness of the assessment and allowed capturing critical issues, such as the impact on the private sector, gender, and the needs for building back better. The rapidness with which the assessment was conducted helped inform the budget deliberation, thereby assuring the government's commitment to support the affected communities in jump-starting the recovery process.

Comprehensive rehabilitation and recovery plan (CRRP). Informed by RAY-BBB and the PDNA and based on detailed sector and area-based plans, the CRRP articulated the overall strategic vision of recovery around four government clusters: livelihood and business development, housing and resettlement, social services, and infrastructure.

PLANNING

Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda: Implementation for Results (RAY-I4R). RAY-I4R provided the policy framework for the four recovery clusters under the assumption that, though many recovery-related needs can be met through regular programs, given the scale of the disaster, additional policies are required to ensure the recovery process takes advantage of the opportunity to strengthen disaster resilience in line with the goals of the Philippine Development Plan. The RAY-I4R results framework describes the recovery program in terms of a results chain.

Adopt a phased, cumulative, and flexible framework to guide recovery.

The wide geographical extent of Typhoon Yolanda and its impact on multiple sectors and regions required a response that is *phased* (meeting critical immediate needs while planning for a sustained recovery program), *cumulative* (successive phases of support build on early recovery), and *flexible* (ensure recovery responds to the changing needs of the affected population). RAY-BBB was successful in setting the tone that postdisaster recovery is a long-term commitment and requires adopting a phased, cumulative and flexible approach. RAY-I4R went a step ahead and provided the policy directions and the results framework linked to the Philippine Development Plan. Further, the chronological undertaking of RAY-BBB, the CRRP, and RAY-I4R ensured consistency with the proposed principles, policies, strategies, and evolving priorities.

Align recovery priorities with long-term development goals to tackle deep-rooted development constraints, including policy issues.

There was a need to understand the disruption caused by the disaster and determine a new trajectory for a sustainable and resilient development. RAY-I4R aligned the Yolanda recovery framework with the goals of the Philippine Development Plan for the typhoon-affected areas, thereby not only justifying the allocation of funds for recovery but also addressing the developmental deficits in the affected areas, which are some of the poorest in the country.

IMPLEMENTATION

Build back better and disaster risk reduction (DRR) principles implemented through sectors. The recovery framework proposed in RAY-I4R emphasizes the opportunities provided by the recovery and reconstruction process for DRR and community strengthening, consistent with the overall goals of the Philippine Development Plan. Accordingly, the recovery and reconstruction programs in all four clusters (livelihood and business development, housing and resettlement, social services, and physical infrastructure) prioritize increasing resilience.

Strengthen community resilience and preparedness.

Building community disaster preparedness into all components of recovery projects is key. There is a need to choose the right mechanism for delivery to ensure funding reaches the local level. Using programs with a proven track record, such as the KALAHI-CIDSS National Community-Driven Development Program, can be effective.

Strengthen livelihoods resilience.

Comprehensive programs that aim at strengthening resilience of livelihood assets, increase access to insurance to manage residual risk, and pay special attention to small businesses are necessary. One misconception regarding resilience is that bringing people back to the level they were at before the disaster event is sufficient—until the same natural disaster knocks them down again. Bringing the people a step farther away from risk is what constitutes resilience—they must be in a better position to face future risks.

Understand risk-sensitive land use planning.

The identification and acquisition of "safe" land is a challenge and requires the affected communities' understanding of the trade-offs. Instructions for risk-sensitive land use planning have been refined to take into account lessons from Typhoon Yolanda, but local government units will require technical assistance to translate national standards and building codes into concrete local regulations that address recovery and long-term resilience.