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RESEARCH REPORT

MAKING ALL
VOICES COUNT

A GRAND CHALLENGE
FOR DEVELOPMENT



Tools, platforms and mechanisms
to support accountability to
disaster-affected populations in
the Philippines

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Contents

Summary	4
1. Introduction	5
1.1 The Philippines: a disaster-prone country	5
1.2 Research objectives	5
2. Methodology	6
3. Disasters and accountability in the Philippines	7
3.1 Accountability during disasters	7
3.2 Disaster governance in the Philippines	7
3.3 The Accountability to Affected Populations and Communication with Communities technical working groups	9
4. Case studies of accountability tools, platforms and mechanisms	10
4.1 The Office of the Presidential Assistant for Recovery and Rehabilitation	10
4.2 The Foreign Aid Transparency Hub	11
4.3 The e-Management Platform: Accountability and Transparency Hub for Yolanda	11
4.4 The OpenBUB portal	12
4.5 Open Reconstruction	12
4.6 Communication with Communities technical working group and community of practice	13
5. Accountability at the community level	14
5.1 Community experiences of transparency and accountability during Typhoon Haiyan	14
5.2 Challenges and recommendations from respondents	18
6. Findings and analysis	18
6.1 Making accountability operational at different governance levels	18
6.2 Accountability criteria in the tools, platforms and mechanisms developed	21
6.3 Common challenges in achieving accountability	25
6.4 Accountability to non-beneficiaries	27
7. Conclusions and recommendations	27
7.1 Setting up an empowering accountability framework during disasters	28
7.2 Appropriateness and relevance of accountability tools, platforms and mechanisms	28
7.3 Communication, participation, feedback and complaints	29
7.4 General recommendations	29
Bibliography	30

Summary

When Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in 2013, several national and local tools, platforms and mechanisms were put in place by government to support a coordinated response. For example two technical groups were intended to ensure that there was regular, two-way communication between affected communities and responders, thus increasing transparency and government accountability.

This research assesses these tools, platforms and mechanisms in terms of how well they supported, and continue to support, the accountability and transparency of government interventions during disaster responses in the Philippines. It also looks at the potential for enhancing and replicating them vertically – across different levels of government – and horizontally – across different agencies, sectors and institutions – in ways that ensure that the principles of accountability and transparency are observed during all disaster responses.

Many of these tools, platforms and mechanisms are web-based and accessible to the public. Combined, they created a system through which the various relief agencies involved in disaster responses can improve transparency, among both project implementers and affected communities. Our research found that these tools, platforms and mechanisms did increase the information provided to communities and receive feedback from them, but that monitoring and evaluation of the services being delivered to communities was not often taking place.

It also found that the unexpected magnitude of recent typhoon events in the Philippines overwhelmed service delivery, particularly in local government units. Overall, emergency response mechanisms, and the governance of these, were chaotic.

The research strongly recommends that the implementation of Republic Act 10121 should clearly define what accountability to disaster-affected communities is, including concrete measures to ensure accountability at all levels, and outline the checks and balances that all humanitarian agencies and other actors need to implement when providing disaster relief.

Key themes in this paper

- Accountability, transparency and communication in disasters
- Disaster risk management in the Philippines
- Online tools and platforms for accountability

1. Introduction

1.1 The Philippines: a disaster-prone country

Located in both the Pacific Ring of Fire¹ and the typhoon belt of the Northwestern Pacific Basin, the Philippines is highly vulnerable to disasters caused by natural hazards such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and typhoons. An average of 20 typhoons reach the country each year, and the typhoons that reach the Philippines are becoming stronger and more devastating (World Bank GFDRR, UNDP and EU 2015). For example, Typhoon Bopha² in 2012 and Typhoon Haiyan³ in 2013 were Category 5 storms – those with winds exceeding 254 kilometres per hour (km/h) – and were devastating for the Philippines (Ibid.).

Typhoon Haiyan was one of the strongest typhoons that made landfall in the world, killing an estimated 6,000 people (NDRRMC 2017). With wind speeds of more than 300 km/h and storm surges of over four metres, it damaged 591 municipalities and 57 cities across 44 provinces in the Philippines, affecting 16 million people, 4 million of whom were displaced. Total financial losses were estimated to be US\$12.9 billion (Ibid.).

The damage caused by Typhoon Haiyan triggered a large-scale national and international response. The United Nations (UN) classified it as a Level 3 emergency and more than 45 international humanitarian agencies were deployed to assist those affected, through direct interventions and/or through the government (Carden and Clements 2015; Peters and Budimir 2015).

One of the mechanisms used by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) was to establish two technical working groups, for Accountability to Affected Populations and Communication with Communities. The main role of these groups was to ensure regular, two-way communication between those affected by the disaster and the responding agencies. They were mostly led by civil society organisations (CSOs), with local government units acting as convenors.

National-level coordination mechanisms were also set up to support the national government's response mechanisms to Typhoon Haiyan. Accountability to affected populations was designated to the Department of Social Welfare and Development, which was also

the lead agency for the response cluster.⁴ Putting accountability measures into operation was limited to the two technical working groups.

Before this disaster, there was no established mechanism in the Philippines for documenting or monitoring accountability to those affected by disasters, with the Department of Social Welfare and Development's mechanisms for gaining feedback from communities the only ones in use. But during the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, two platforms – the e-Management Platform: Accountability and Transparency Hub for Yolanda (eMPATHY) and Foreign Aid Transparency Hub (FAiTH) platform – were created to record all the aid received by the national government, and to which projects this was allocated. However, humanitarian agencies, communities and even the government felt that these platforms were not very useful for the communities affected.

Further, few reports have been written to discuss government accountability and transparency during emergencies in the Philippines. After Typhoon Haiyan, only the Commission on Audit came up with a solid report on disaster-related resources, expenditures and responses by various government agencies. The Commission on Audit (2014:19) acknowledged that “no single agency is actually monitoring the receipt and utilization of funds received as donation or grants for calamity victims”, and that it had not finalised its own guidelines for enhancing the auditing of disaster funds.

1.2 Research objectives

The overall objective of the research was to evaluate the tools, platforms and mechanisms at the national and community levels, specifically those that were used during Typhoon Haiyan, and determine how they were used to increase accountability to affected populations during and after disasters.

The research initially identified online platforms: two technical working groups that supported accountability and coordination, and a government-established coordination structure for recovery and rehabilitation. It examined how these platforms and mechanisms could be improved to support accountability and transparency of government interventions for future disaster responses in the Philippines.

¹ An area in the Pacific Ocean basin where many earthquakes and volcanic eruptions occur.

² Known as Typhoon Pablo in the Philippines.

³ Known as Super Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines.

⁴ Based on the Cluster approach adopted by the then National Disaster Coordinating Council through Memorandum Circular no. 12 s. 2008. See www.ndrrmc.gov.ph/attachments/article/1334/NDRP_Hydro_Meteorological_Hazards_as_of_2014.pdf

Consequently, the research also evaluated a range of other tools, platforms and mechanisms to see which could be enhanced and/or replicated in ways which ensure that the principles of accountability and

transparency are observed. It considered integration in the vertical sense – across all levels of the government – and in the horizontal sense – across different agencies, sectors and institutions.

2. Methodology

The research was designed following the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability,⁵ launched in 2014. This incorporates nine commitments that agencies can use as criteria when designing their disaster response plans and in the delivery of services. These also outline, to communities and people affected by disasters, what they can expect from the organisations and individuals delivering humanitarian assistance.

From these nine commitments, we derived the following accountability principles for our data collection tools and analysis, to establish if the responses to Typhoon Haiyan: (1) were appropriate and relevant; (2) were effective and timely; (3) enabled communication, participation and feedback; (4) addressed complaints; (5) strengthened local capacities; (6) were coordinated and complementary; (7) led to learning and improvement; (8) increased staff effectiveness; and (9) enabled responsible resource management. The research was then implemented using multiple quantitative and qualitative methods.

Quantitative methods

We conducted a survey to evaluate the communities' experiences and perceptions on the accountability tools, platforms and mechanisms that they were able to access, and to generate recommendations from them on how to improve accountability to affected populations. The city of Tacloban and the municipality of Tanauan, Leyte, were selected because they suffered the greatest number of casualties during Typhoon Haiyan and still have transitional shelters for those who lost their homes. Tacloban represents a highly urbanised area while Tanauan represents rural communities.

The team selected communities that were, at the time of the research, still living in resettlement sites and transitional housing / evacuation sites provided by the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private entities, because these groups had received

and / or were still receiving support from various institutions. The survey was conducted among 500 residents in ten affected communities, and respondents were randomly selected from these sites based on a list provided by their local leaders.

The survey had 41 questions which were developed to be used with Kobo Collect, a mobile data-collection tool. This meant that it could be filled out on mobile phones or tablet devices, and responses collated and encoded directly. Five data collectors were trained in how to use Kobo Collect, and they then conducted the survey in the ten municipalities. The survey was conducted over five days in both Tanauan and Tacloban, during the period August 29 – September 10, 2016.

In total, 373 (74.6%) respondents were female and 127 (25.4%) were male. The mean age of all respondents was 54, ranging from 18 to 84 years old. In terms of civil status, 74% of respondents were married, 11% were widowed, 10% were 'living-in' (i.e. non-married couples), 3% were separated and 2% were single-headed households.

The male respondents, particularly husbands, worked as skilled labourers, construction workers, fishermen and pedicab drivers.⁶ The female respondents, especially wives, owned a variety of stores and local eateries. Of the total respondents, 375 were earning less than 5,000 Phillipine pesos (PHP) a month (approximately US\$99). Only 14 respondents had a family income of more than PHP10,000 a month.

Just over half (51.2%) of all respondents came from a different *barangay*⁷ to those in which the survey was conducted, meaning they had been resettled after the typhoon. The houses of almost all respondents (89.2%) were totally destroyed, while 68.4% lost other properties,⁸ and 56.8% lost their livelihood. In terms of the human cost, 44.8% had family members who were injured, 18.6% lost a family member or members, and 8.6% had a family member or members still missing.

⁵ <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>

⁶ A form of pedal-powered transport common in the Philippines.

⁷ As the basic political unit, the *barangay* serves as the primary planning and implementing unit of government policies, plans, programmes, projects and activities in the community, and as a forum wherein the collective views of the people may be expressed, crystallised and considered, and where disputes may be amicably settled, according to the Local Government Code of the Philippines.

⁸ Immovable or movable private properties such as buildings and personal belongings, as stated in the Civil Code of the Philippines.

Qualitative methods

After the survey responses were processed, we held focus group discussions in each community to elaborate on specific concerns raised during the survey. Community leaders selected 127 participants, 79 female and 48 male. Each focus group discussion had an average of ten participants, apart from one to which several residents came.

During the research we also created mini case studies of the accountability platforms developed by various agencies for projects related to Typhoon Haiyan. Data for these was gathered through key informant interviews, reviewing documents and active online portals, and the participation of former agency staff as

researchers in the study. We approached informants from national government agencies that are part of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, members of the two technical working groups, and local government offices in Tacloban and Tanauan. From these, three government agencies, seven NGOs (from the technical working groups) and one local government office granted interviews, with 14 people interviewed in total.

In analysing the tools and platforms, we used the nine commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standard to evaluate if the criteria were observed in the content and / or operationalisation of the tools, platforms and mechanisms.

3. Disasters and accountability in the Philippines

3.1 Accountability during disasters

The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (2010: 1) defines accountability as “the means through which power is used responsibly. It considers accountability as a *process* that considers the views of, and is held accountable by, different stakeholders, primarily the people affected by authority or power”. The Core Humanitarian Standard highlights that this power should be used responsibly to *take account of, and be held accountable by* different stakeholders and by those who were affected by the use of that power (Groupe URD *et al.* 2014). Meanwhile, the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR 2010) notes that there are many different levels of accountability, and different stakeholder groups to which an organisation is accountable: affected populations, funding agencies, government and the general public.

Further, the Humanitarian Accountability Report (CHS Alliance 2015: 8) states that “accountability and effectiveness mean different things to different people and are measured in different ways”, and that “being accountable is about taking responsibility for actions (and inaction), results, behaviours, successes, failures, mistakes, and for learning (not just gathering) lessons. Accountability does not flow only ‘upwards’ to donors or ‘downwards’ to communities, but rather in all directions between people and organisations who have a relationship to one another.”

3.2 Disaster governance in the Philippines

According to United Nation resolution, each state is responsible for the initiation, organisation, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within its territory (Podger 2015). Since national governments are responsible for disaster recovery, most countries have created a national agency for disaster management to report overall disaster responses to the head of state (Ibid.).

The Philippines, as a middle-income country with one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia, has a well-defined legal structure that is conducive for promoting accountability and transparency for disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM). The executive arm of the government – the president, the vice president and the cabinet secretaries of various government departments – leads the implementation and execution of policies at the national level (Blanco 2015). Government agencies⁹ have regional offices which support the implementation of national policies at the regional level. Elected local government officials, at the provincial, city, municipal and *barangay* levels, are responsible for actually implementing national policies and local ordinances.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, established under the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Law in 2010 (the Republic Act 10121¹⁰), is the highest-level policy-making body

⁹ These include commissions, authorities and bureaus that are not directly part of the executive branch, while government departments are part of the president’s cabinet and part of the executive.

¹⁰ See: www.preventionweb.net/english/policies/v.php?id=30820&cid=135

The Philippines has a well-defined legal structure that is conducive for promoting accountability and transparency for disaster risk reduction and management.

for disaster management. It was created to establish an enabling environment for government action at all levels, and embed a culture of continued accountability to and communication with people affected by a disaster. It also advises the president on the disaster management responses taken by government bodies and the private sector. The Council is replicated at the regional and local levels, and these bodies function in a similar manner, operating and utilising resources at their respective levels (Commission on Audit 2014).

Different government departments oversee the following thematic areas of Republic Act 10121:

- Preparedness: the Department of Interior and Local Government
- Response: the Department of Social Welfare and Development
- Prevention and mitigation: the Department of Science and Technology
- Rehabilitation and recovery: the National Economic and Development Authority.

Aside from these, the Office of Civil Defense, under the Department of National Defense, serves as the secretariat and implementing arm of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council. Alongside the regional, provincial and local DRRM councils are civil defense offices that support local disaster governance. The Office of Civil Defense conducts DRRM planning, training, coordination, emergency response, and operational support to the national and local government. During Typhoon Haiyan, the Office of Civil Defense continued to support the Council while coordinating with international and local organisations, private groups and local government units.

The Republic Act 10121 provides the legal basis and mandate for local government accountability pertaining to disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM).¹¹ For example, it established local DRRM offices at all levels – province, city and municipality – which are responsible for designing, programming and coordinating DRRM activities in each local government

unit, and for formulating comprehensive and integrated local DRRM plans. They are also mandated to facilitate and support risk assessments, consolidate local disaster risk information and operate multi-hazard warning systems.

In terms of capacity-building and knowledge management for DRR, Section 12 of the Act stipulates that each local DRRM office should organise and conduct training and orientation, disseminate information, organise public awareness campaigns, and ensure the maintenance and provision of human resources, equipment and facilities for DRRM. During emergencies, the offices are responsible for responding to and managing adverse effects, and for ensuring recovery. To realise this, each local government unit has a DRRM fund, equivalent to not less than 5% of its regular revenues; 30% of this is put aside as a quick response fund for post-disaster relief and recovery efforts. Given their mandate and resources, and their access to and familiarity with local communities, local government units are, theoretically, in the best position to undertake DRRM activities, including providing information to communities. Unfortunately, they face several challenges that mean many fail in fulfilling these tasks (this is discussed later in this research report).

Because of the scale of devastation wrought by Typhoon Haiyan, the government established the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery to serve as the overall manager and coordinator of rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction efforts. This Office oversaw the formulation of plans and programmes for affected areas; proposed funding support for the implementation of these plans and programmes; and reported on the progress of each programme's implementation (Co, Pamintuan and Dino 2016; National Economic and Development Agency nd). It was expected to work with the Office of Civil Defense in assisting local government units affected by Typhoon Haiyan in their recovery and rehabilitation efforts.

Despite these measures, the monitoring and evaluation of progress in terms of disaster response still occurred in silos; for example, the Department of Social Welfare and Development only considered its own interventions

¹¹ According to the Republic Act 10121, DRRM refers to systematic process of implementing strategies, policies and coping capacities to reduce the adverse impacts of hazards and the possibility of disaster; by contrast, disaster risk reduction (DRR) focuses on the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters (UN 2009).

Related to this lack of coordinated monitoring and evaluation, accountability and transparency efforts during the response to Typhoon Haiyan were very limited.

when monitoring programme implementation. As a result, affected communities were not given a comprehensive picture of what was happening on the ground. Financial accountability was also lacking: only the Commission on Audit could report on disaster-related expenditures in 2014, and there was no single government agency in charge of working on the receipt and use of funds for emergency responses – thus no one was held accountable for not reporting these matters (Commission on Audit 2014).

However, Carden and Clements (2015) report that there were longstanding relationships between the government and the other actors, including CSOs and NGOs, mainly because of the many disasters that had already struck the Philippines. This meant that coordination between the government and these organisations was strong from the outset. As established under national law in 2007, government-led humanitarian clusters led and oversaw the coordination of responses to Typhoon Haiyan, with support from international actors (Scriven 2013).

3.3 The Accountability to Affected Populations and Communication with Communities technical working groups

Related to this lack of coordinated monitoring and evaluation, accountability and transparency efforts during the response to Typhoon Haiyan were very limited. Among the efforts that did take place were the establishment of the technical working groups for Communication with Communities and Accountability to Affected Populations.

In 2013, the Philippines was facing problems on many fronts. Still recovering from Typhoon Bopha in 2012, an armed conflict between the Moro National Liberation Front and government forces in September caused further issues, with 119,000 people displaced and over 10,000 homes destroyed. A month later, the Bohol earthquake hit the country.

This series of disasters highlighted the need for affected communities have accurate and timely information. In response, the Communication with

Communities technical working group was established as an humanitarian inter-cluster communications support and coordination mechanism. The group was set up to: provide a connection between survivors and their families; raise early warnings and risk awareness; and relay information about the services available communities, as well as hygiene and disease prevention. It focused on meeting the information and communication needs of affected populations. This group also benefitted the humanitarian community by helping to reduce the duplication of messages and interventions, circumventing conflicting information, addressing information gaps and ensuring community feedback was addressed (Carden and Clements 2015; CDAC Network 2014a).

This group brought together all the actors working on public information and community resource mobilisation, resulting in the conduct of series of transparency ‘forum caravans’.¹² As an early task, various UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), with support from the Philippine Information Agency and local government units, conducted the first coordinated assessment of information needs and preferred communication channels among affected communities.

The Accountability to Affected Populations group played a coherent role in advocating the needs of affected populations through supporting and linking cross-cutting issues such as gender, protection (e.g. child protection, protection from abuse, protection from gender-based violence) and communication with communities.¹³ It also helped humanitarian organisations by providing analysed, processed information which could quickly be used and understood, rather than these organisations having to collect and analyse community-level data themselves. The group also provided a clear framework for the provision of high-quality, equitable services to all segments of the affected communities.

Despite these achievements, the Communication with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network (2014a) found that running two separate technical working groups created unnecessary silos. Though the terms of reference for each were clear at the onset, at the local level there

¹² Forum caravans involve different NGOs and UN agencies going to communities to hold a forum with the people affected by a disaster.

¹³ There was some overlap in responsibilities between the two technical working groups, and many people were members of both.

seemed to be overlapping functions; for example, both groups looked at transparency, information provision, participation, and feedback and complaints.

In some affected places, however, the two groups were more closely integrated. Communities including Guian, Ormoc and Tacloban set up the jointly managed Accountability to Affected Populations–Communication with Communities (AAP–CwC) technical working groups. According to UN OCHA, this resulted in a “richer and complete picture of information, two-way communication and the differential need of communities with CwC providing far greater technical expertise and depth on the subject matter, and AAP providing a stronger and broader social and rights-based framework within which to locate and guide the work” (CDAC Network 2014b: 5). Having joint technical working groups made the flow of information much more relevant, as it was more clearly aimed

at improving the quality and results of programmes, leading to better decision-making (Carden and Clements 2015; CDAC Network 2014a).

Wigley (2015), in a case study undertaken as part of the response to Typhoon Haiyan, emphasised that addressing a community’s communications, information and connectivity needs is a clear priority in any humanitarian response. The quality of the communications work after Typhoon Haiyan was greatly enhanced by the merging of the two technical working groups: the Accountability to Affected Populations group provided a focus that encouraged involvement with communities at a deeper level, clear problem definition, the consideration of cross-cutting issues and greater follow through and responses to two-way communication. Together, the two technical working groups effectively combined technological expertise and social science (Ibid.).

4. Case studies of accountability tools, platforms and mechanisms

In the spirit of transparency and accountability, and in response to public clamour to know where relief resources were being used, the government established several national-level tools, platforms and mechanisms to enable public reporting. These attempted to record the aid received from various donors for the response to Typhoon Haiyan, as well as the status of relief programmes and projects. This section discusses these tools, platforms and mechanisms.

4.1 The Office of the Presidential Assistant for Recovery and Rehabilitation

The colossal damage that the disaster brought to millions of Filipinos made it necessary for the government to create an office to lead reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. The Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery was established under former President Benigno Simeon Aquino III on December 6, 2013. Senator Panfilo Lacson served as head of this office from its creation to February 2015, the period during which most relief efforts for Typhoon Haiyan took place.

Specifically, the Office was responsible for harmonising the initiatives and efforts of various government

agencies and other relevant bodies, such as international organisations, private sector companies and foundations, engaged in post-Haiyan rehabilitation. To perform its roles and responsibilities effectively, the Office coordinated with the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council and consulted with concerned local government units.

As part of its mandate, the Office led the development of the Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Recovery Program, which was approved on October 30, 2014, with a budget of PHP170.9 billion (approximately US\$3.38 billion). This programme, which took nine months to finalise, consolidated the various rehabilitation efforts into five clusters: (1) infrastructure; (2) resettlement; (3) social services; (4) livelihoods; and (5) support.¹⁴

The process of formulating this programme was guided by the principle of ‘building back better and safer’, which promotes holistic and sustainable rehabilitation and recovery initiatives. Specifically, it advocates for: planning and constructing disaster-resilient facilities, infrastructure and resettlement sites; seeking viable livelihood opportunities for affected populations, including small and medium enterprises and growing typhoon-resistant crops; and enhancing social protection mechanisms in areas affected by a disaster.

¹⁴ These were identified by implementing agencies, including the Department of Public Works and Highways, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Budget and Management and the National Economic and Development Authority.

4.2 The Foreign Aid Transparency Hub

The Foreign Aid Transparency Hub (FAiTH) was designed as an online platform to allow the government to track foreign aid for victims of Typhoon Haiyan, and allow the public to look at the status of foreign aid channelled through government agencies. Initially launched in December 2013 and relaunched in April 2014, the platform holds information primarily on humanitarian assistance pledged or given by countries and international organisations, as well as donations coursed through the Commission on Filipinos Overseas' 'Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino' programme (World Bank GFDRR *et al.* 2015). FAiTH also holds data on donations coursed through Philippine embassies abroad, aid assistance (both financial and in-kind donations) coming from overseas Filipino workers, foreign donors and local donations from private groups and organisations (Government Gazette 2017).

Each embassy or organisation is given a unique account, with a username and password, which allows it to input and update pledges. Data is updated regularly, and each transaction generates a unique transaction identification number. Apart from the online updates, a Note Verbale is officially communicated to the Department of Foreign Affairs for each pledge.

Foreign donors are expected to notify the Philippine government about their pledges before these are posted on the platform, and donations should be channelled through government aid agencies or the Philippine Red Cross (as an NGO member of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council). However, during the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, only officially declared pledges were recorded on FAiTH; some foreign donors preferred not to put costs on their assistance, especially for non-cash support. The platform was easy to manage and information was updated regularly. A FAiTH Task Force was created to monitor the data coming into the portal.¹⁵ The challenge was that while the platform displayed all the pledges, it did not reflect where these were being used. This prevented the public from sending feedback or asking questions about how certain amounts were used or allocated. FAiTH was eventually shut down and replaced by eMPATHY, which covered all other funds for Typhoon Haiyan. Its website¹⁶ is no longer operational, but the Department of Budget and Management still publishes the FAiTH report on the Philippine government's official website.¹⁷

4.3 The e-Management Platform: Accountability and Transparency Hub for Yolanda

In January 2014, almost three months after Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines, the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery asked the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for assistance with developing an information management system for project monitoring. The government needed to increase transparency and accountability in managing the aid and assistance given for the country's recovery and reconstruction efforts, particularly at the local level, since the FAiTH platform had not been able to track donations directed to local government units and coming from local donors. A scoping mission was conducted to assess the needs, capacities and institutional framework for establishing an aid management tracking system in the Philippines. UNDP launched a call for proposals and SYNERGY International was awarded the contract to develop a software platform that aligned with the needs of the Office (World Bank GFDRR *et al.* 2015). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provided technical assistance worth US\$10 million to support this, and the result was eMPATHY, an online platform which listed the rehabilitation projects being implemented by local, national and foreign groups in areas affected by Typhoon Haiyan.¹⁸

Information presented in eMPATHY included: donors; types of rehabilitation project; the names of the winning contractors; the dates of contracts being awarded; the status of project implementation; and the cost of projects. This information covered 171 cities and municipalities from 14 provinces in six affected regions. The Office envisioned that eMPATHY would help to ensure that all involved agencies and stakeholders would refer to a common, unified platform for projects and programmes, and it achieved this: eMPATHY provided a comprehensive, centralised system for tracking the progress of response and recovery efforts. This information was largely intended for the public to access.

Government agencies, international organisations, and private organisations and foundations – the implementers of relief efforts – were given access to the platform and instructed to provide updates on their projects (World Bank GFBDRR *et al.* 2015) to

¹⁵ Members included representatives from the Department of Budget and Management, the Commission on Filipino Overseas, the Department of Finance, the Department of Health, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the National Economic and Development Authority, the Office of Civil Defense, the Office of the Presidential Spokesperson, Presidential Management Staff, and the Presidential Communications Development and Strategic Planning Office. The Commission on Audit provided advisory support (Government Gazette 2017).

¹⁶ Weblink no longer active

¹⁷ See www.officialgazette.gov.ph/faith/full-report

¹⁸ Weblink no longer active

help ensure the data was kept up to date. They enter data on interventions that they plan to do, which are verified and submitted online. Once the project has been approved, implementation progress is periodically updated. The Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery also formed a team to encourage partners to upload their information.

eMPATHY was envisioned as an information and monitoring platform to promote accountability, allowing individuals and groups to follow the development of projects and report issues and problems when necessary (e.g. the use of substandard materials). But it also helped the Office to analyse recovery programmes once completed, and identify where interventions were still lacking. This helped to point donors and agencies to geographic areas needing assistance (Avendano 2014).

As with many technology platforms, however, eMPATHY had several limitations. First, users felt that it was time-consuming to evaluate the data for compatibility and validity. The authenticity of data was also in question, especially when several projects were being uploaded with no clear validation mechanism on the ground. The processing of data could not be accomplished in real time as the encoding takes a lot of time without any dedicated staff to do it from the contributing agencies. Further, projects are often planned in different formats, for example on spreadsheets or using Word templates. Such formats were incompatible with eMPATHY's data fields, so importing them often led to technical glitches. There was also the challenge of human resources, with no dedicated web administrator or government agency with a budget allocation to maintain the system.

The biggest limitation, however, was the platform's failure to ensure that all system users were held accountable for submitting data, especially since, at that time, the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery had no mandate to compel all agencies to submit their data. The website was closed down in 2016.

4.4 The OpenBUB portal

Bottom-up budgeting (BUB) is an approach to the preparation of agency budget proposals that considers the development needs of cities / municipalities, as identified in their poverty reduction action plans, which are formulated with the strong participation of community-based organisations and other CSOs. Bottom-up budgeting in the Philippines can be traced back to 2010, when President Benigno Aquino III formulated his 16-point agenda, the 'Social Contract with the Filipino People'.

Bottom-up budgeting projects for disaster response / rehabilitation and DRR in municipalities hit by

Typhoon Haiyan were included in the 2014 national planning process, and funded through the General Appropriations Act of 2015. Unlike in previous years, the bottom-up budgeting process for 2015 included all local government units nationwide. This meant that all those affected by Typhoon Haiyan were given an opportunity to maximise the number of DRR projects in their plans. When implementing these projects, local government units were made accountable for ensuring that government procurement, budgeting, accounting and auditing rules and regulations were observed. They were also responsible for ensuring that the design and cost of these projects did not exceed the cost of similar projects being implemented by national government agencies in the same locality.

Following on from this, the OpenBUB (bottom-up budgeting) Portal¹⁹ was launched during the last quarter of 2016. The Department of Interior and Local Government, which hosts the Bottom-up Budgeting Project Management Office, was tasked with administering this website. Three staff per government agency were assigned to upload quarterly reports, with each staff member undertaking different tasks to ensure the validity and correctness of the reports.

- A reporter encodes the status reports, thus starting the reporting process.
- A submitter reviews the encoded report and submits it to the portal.
- A validator confirms and resubmits the report, after the necessary corrections and editing are complete.

The OpenBUB Portal has displayed some functionality as a monitoring tool for transparency. Through its reporting systems, it has provided the public with up-to-date information (quarterly reports) on bottom-up budgeting projects. Also notable is the putting in place of a unified reporting system across agencies, which ensures the timely input of data to the portal.

However, these gains will inevitably be affected by the directions of the new administration of President Rodrigo Duterte. One of its first official actions was to scrap the bottom-up budgeting programme. Subsequently, projects for 2017 were not budgeted in the 2017 General Appropriations Act.

4.5 Open Reconstruction

Open Reconstruction²⁰ is a free-to-use public website that balances transparency and the public's right to know with the need for efficiency in governance. Its main use is the tracking of reconstruction projects and requests for reconstruction support during disaster situations, including Typhoon Haiyan and the Bohol

¹⁹ <http://openbub.gov.ph/>.

²⁰ <http://openreconstruction.gov.ph/>.

earthquake in 2013. Through this website, the media, local governments and individuals can access all kinds of important information about projects, including: status; a summary of requests for reconstruction projects; processing times; and costs. Maps of damaged infrastructure are also available, including the location of the project site, and are easily viewed through a navigation feature. Other features include a feedback mechanism and interactive mechanisms to share information easily through social media. Combined, these mean that users can easily make sense of the volumes of data held, through graphs and charts included in the website, and share these as desired.

Many of the requests made to the website conflicted vertically (from the local to the national level) and horizontally (across local governments, or across national government agencies), for example because some offices still use paper-based processes for making requests. It was difficult to get some government offices to commit to a single unified process, especially since for some this would mean creating extra steps in their own internal processes.

Ultimately, one of the greatest challenges is the current lack of use. The system is in place, but it is not yet being used by some government agencies. More importantly, information must be uploaded regularly to achieve transparency, and all local government units must ensure that they are doing this – but this is not happening due to various reasons, such as a lack of designated personnel to upload information, continued use of paper-based filing and requesting, and a lack of training on how to use the platform.

4.6 Communication with Communities technical working group and community of practice

The networks and relationships within the Communication with Communities technical working group were strengthened during Typhoon Haiyan. This enabled communication with community initiatives to get off the ground quickly when Typhoon Hagupit²¹ hit in 2014. Through UN OCHA's efforts, the First Response Radio–Far-East Broadcasting Company and the Peace and Conflict Journalism Network met and agreed to deploy a joint team to set up a humanitarian radio station in the municipality of Taft, Eastern Samar, which was the area worst hit by Typhoon Hagupit.

The Communication with Communities technical working group evolved to become a Community

of Practice on Community Engagement in Eastern Visayas,²² as part of the preparedness initiative in this region. This was done in response to the need for a formal network to mainstream an integrated, coordinated approach to communication, accountability and community participation, especially in times of disaster. Through this, members could put both technologies (e.g. solar radios) and staff in place days before the typhoon made land. The use of social media and pre-evacuation community consultations and assessments, as well as strong coordination with the local government units, worked successfully after Typhoon Hagupit, according to an assessment made by members of the Community of Practice.

In January 2015, UN OCHA formalised this Community of Practice by giving it terms of reference, a strategy and a work plan. Further, its role combined communications, accountability, community participation and common service partnerships, when initially the technical working groups considered communication and accountability as separate issues. It is currently chaired by UN OCHA, with technical support from the CDAC Network and other humanitarian organisations that have been involved in the mainstreaming of communication, accountability and community participation in the Philippines since 2012. UN OCHA also serves as the overall secretariat.

Today, the Community of Practice on Community Engagement acts as an inclusive, cross-sector coordination and technical support group that brings together all those working on community engagement. As well as those involved in the initial technical working group (see Section 3.3), it includes the private sector (specifically telecommunication companies and online media networks), faith-based groups, academia, and the mainstream media and humanitarian press. It provides recommendations, updates and relevant reports to the Humanitarian Country Team,²³ both in terms of disaster preparedness and response. Information about disaster response (e.g. available services, resources, research undertakings, and best practices) is shared systematically with affected communities through appropriate channels (e.g. flyers, reports, presentations in meetings). In terms of preparedness, various measures help to share life-saving information related to early warnings and community-based preparedness.

Its effective coordination and partnerships mean the Community of Practice has been able to share information effectively with people before, during

²¹ Known as Typhoon Ruby in the Philippines.

²² This was where most of the NGOs were working at that time, since Eastern Visayas was the worst-affected region.

²³ The Humanitarian Country Team is a strategic and operational decision-making and oversight forum, established and led by the Humanitarian Coordinator. It is responsible for agreeing on common strategic issues related to humanitarian action. It is comprised of representatives from the UN, the International Organization for Migration, international NGOs, and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. Agencies that are designated cluster leads should represent the clusters as well as their respective organisations.

During the focus group discussions, respondents shared that in the initial stages of the emergency response, they valued information as much as the services being provided. They considered receiving timely information to be an important task for the government, as being provided with accurate, on-time information could save lives.

and after emergencies, and ensure communities participate meaningfully in relief processes. But it is large, comprising around 50 organisations. Further, it is highly diverse and includes organisations with limited capacities and resources. Having so many agencies in one system continues to create challenges. For example, the size of some of its technical working groups means that outcomes are slow to realise,

and the coordination of joint communication and information needs assessments, as well as the monitoring of communications initiatives during responses, are not always sufficient. Further, some agency managers still fail to understand the importance of the Community of Practice, which leads to a focus on implementing each agency's respective mandates instead of collaborative initiatives.

5. Accountability at the community level

While national platforms for DRR accountability are useful for stakeholders in need of this level of data, information needs vary greatly at the community level, as the survey of communities affected by Typhoon Haiyan demonstrated. The data provided provides insights into how accountability mechanisms and procedures were implemented at the community level in the aftermath of this disaster, and how effective these were in increasing transparency and accountability.

5.1 Community experiences of transparency and accountability during Typhoon Haiyan

Appropriateness and relevance of services provided

Due to the considerable losses caused by the disaster, 96.4% of survey respondents received relief from their *barangay* or local government unit, and 93% received relief from NGOs or private entities. The types of relief received included housing materials (65%),²⁴ cash-for-work from NGOs and private entities (37.4%), cash-for-work from government agencies (14.4%), livelihood assistance such as poultry or transport services such as boats or pedicabs (27%),²⁵

medical assistance (23.2%), cash for burials or cash for medical assistance (13.4%), and transport for evacuation (3.4%).

As examples, the average amounts received were:

- PHP260 per day for cash-for-work, from the government and from NGOs / private entities
- PHP5,000 for medical assistance
- PHP10,000 for burial assistance.

Respondents felt that the services that were provided were appropriate to their needs, especially during the initial stages of the emergency response. The services outlined above were based on the services usually provided by humanitarian agencies during a disaster.

Timeliness and quality of the information provided

During the focus group discussions, respondents shared that in the initial stages of the emergency response, they valued information as much as the services being provided. They considered receiving *timely* information to be an important task for the government, as being provided with accurate, on-time information could save lives.

²⁴ This direct housing assistance came from both the government and NGOs; 75% received cash support while 25% received cash vouchers.

²⁵ Of the 115 respondents receiving livelihood assistance, 14 received this from the government and the rest received it from various other sources.

Box 1. The realities of providing information before, during and after a major disaster event

Before Typhoon Haiyan struck, people knew it was coming and that it would be strong. They were informed through television, radio, *barangay* officials, neighbours and local government units. Those who lived in danger areas, or in houses made of light materials, were taken to designated evacuation centres (e.g. sports complexes, schools, churches and supermarkets) or stayed with neighbours in sturdier houses.

However, the information on the typhoon's nature, including the possible impact of storm surge, was inadequate. Communities therefore made the same preparations as for other typhoons. Some said later that, the day before Typhoon Haiyan, the sun was up and they never expected that there would be such a storm surge. They said that if warnings had used the term 'tsunami', then they would have understood what was coming. Thus, when the typhoon struck, they were taken by surprise at its height and the intensity of the flood it brought. And, unknown to them, the places to which they were evacuated were often also at risk.

When the typhoon struck, people were dazed; they could not believe what had happened. And everybody was concerned with their own safety and their family's safety – including the people involved in rescue operations. One *barangay* official said that he lost two children and started burying them in the middle of the road as a temporary burial site. Consequently, there was no one directing on what should be done and everybody seemed to be acting on their own.

Many people slept in the rain on the first night and few had any food. Indeed, for many there was no food relief or assistance during the first three days after the typhoon. Community members were told by their local officials that the food packages prepared for distribution were all washed out by the storm surge. This was just one of many failures in local governance at the height of the disaster, resulting in greater losses and risks at the community level.

Information dissemination was also inadequate and chaotic at this time. People were receiving information from various sources, but there was not always two-way communication. Some communities had no means of sending back information about

their whereabouts, because there was no electricity or mobile phone signals. Some local government officials came and explained why there was a delay in the delivery of relief goods, mainly because the stationed relief goods were destroyed and the relief goods coming from Manila were held up due to a delay in their transportation. But due to the inconsistent approach to sharing information, on the third day after the typhoon, some residents learned that a mall had been forcibly opened and went to get food. Some store owners in the neighbourhood gave the food free to residents.

Processes for providing services after a disaster are complex – one official described these as “complicated and difficult to comply with” – which prevented the government from implementing DRRM programmes effectively immediately after Typhoon Haiyan. As well as the many requirements, there were also violations of rules and inconsistency in following procedures. For example, it was said that only those who were in the temporary shelters could receive permanent shelters. However, some people did not stay in the temporary shelters but in housing units in the resettlement area – leading to confusion about what their entitlements were. The selection of beneficiaries rests with local government officials, and some people said that politics seemed to influence this, with those having opposition political affiliations not being treated equally.

In reality, it was the alternative, non-government support systems that enabled communities to respond, survive and recover from the disaster. There is a strong sentiment among those affected by disasters in the Philippines – Typhoon Haiyan and others – that government agencies are ineffective in responding during and immediately after such events. They are more grateful to the NGOs and international humanitarian agencies, including the UN agencies, that provide cash for work, relief goods, medical services and other emergency assistance. There is a perception that other residents are a greater source of support than the government; people help each other, for example looking for missing family members, sharing food, and helping to clean away debris and solid waste from affected areas.

The magnitude of damage and the high survival level of the population after Typhoon Haiyan meant it was critical for them to be given information on the types of services they would receive, among other things. The survey revealed that people placed almost equal importance on

the need for information from the government and NGOs. This included information, from both sources, about what services would be provided; when these would be given; who the beneficiaries would be; how often the services would be provided; and who would be providing them.

The survey revealed that 42.4% of respondents received information within 3–5 days of the disaster event, while 11.2% only got information after a month and 5% of respondents never got any information. And, despite the rapid provision of information to some people, respondents felt that the immediate information provided about the services they really needed was zero. Instead, they only received information about the casualties and the scope of the disaster, not about the help that was on the way. This aggravated their desperate situations, which resulted in chaotic scenes in the immediate aftermath. For example, people had no one to approach regarding their basic need for food, and had to get this from department stores – which was often labelled as looting. This demonstrates how a lack of information can contribute to a lapse or loss in peace, order and authority after disaster events.

Even after the immediate emergency phase was over, those responsible for providing assistance did not provide information that could help people on a regular basis. According to respondents, these agencies (including *barangay* officials, local government units, community leaders, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, NGOs, the media and the Philippine Information Agency) only provided information intermittently. This failed to meet the desired frequency: people wanted information on at least a weekly basis, with a daily basis the next preferred frequency.

A further issue was the trustworthiness of information. Most respondents claimed that, of the information they received, they particularly doubted information about

cash assistance and the provision of emergency shelter assistance; both of these were given in cash. There were strong feelings that they were not receiving the amounts promised by the relevant authorities. When asked during the focus group discussions on who they trusted most, residents mentioned NGOs, particularly one faith-based organisation that gave them cash assistance way above the amounts provided by other organisations and government agencies. To validate the information received, most respondents asked their *barangay* officials.

Addressing grievances and feedback

Conversations with affected residents brought many grievances to the surface. Figure 1 shows that the first source of grievances pertained to livelihood options, which were limited in the affected areas before Typhoon Haiyan and worsened after the disaster. Many of the resettlement areas were located far from the cities, displacing many people from their sources of livelihood. Since many of these were informal settlers who depended on trading and providing casual labour, they were placed in a situation where they could not earn a living. Many others were fishermen, and the relocation sites were far from the sea.

The second major source of grievances related to the provision of relief goods by the *barangay* and local government units. Respondents identified unequal distribution as a major source of grievance: some people did not receive relief goods during the distribution process, particularly those living in distant

Figure 1. Focus of grievances of respondents about the relief services provided

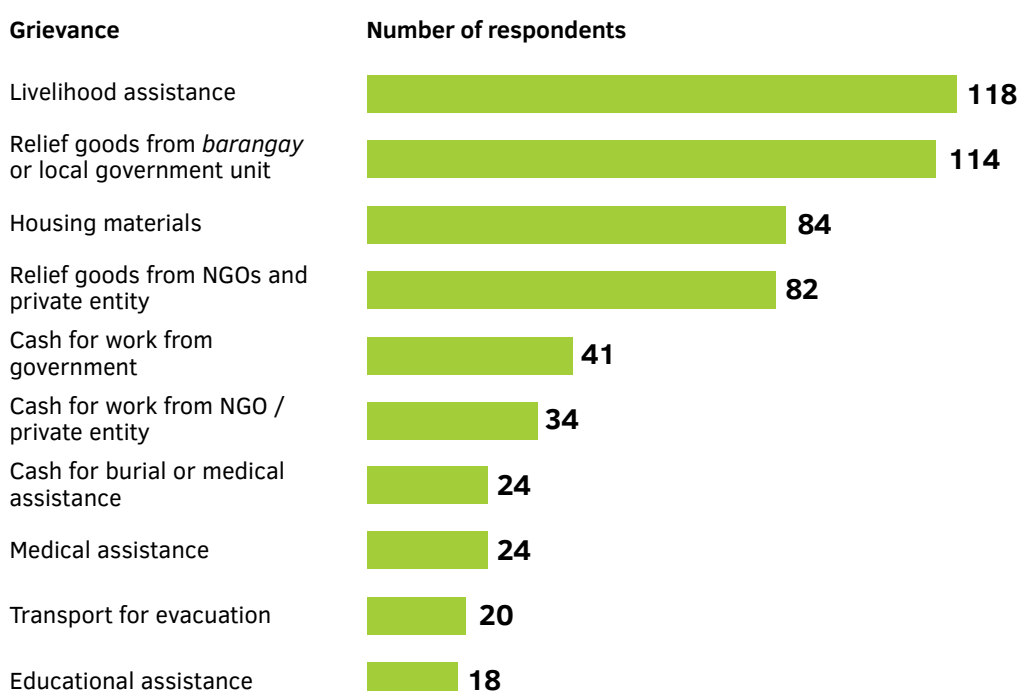
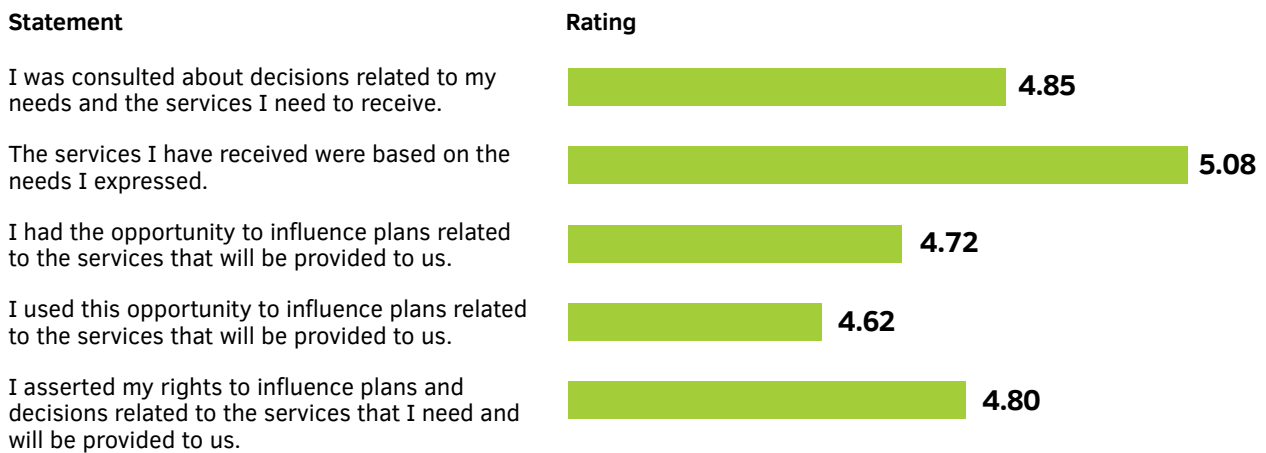


Figure 2. Participation rating by survey respondents (scale: 1–10)



areas. There were also complaints that high-quality relief goods, such as imported corned beef and meat loaf, were not distributed, with lower-quality goods (such as sardines) given instead.

Respondents have identified *barangay* officials and NGO representatives as those most likely to receive and listen to their grievances and questions. Many respondents said that they informed their *barangay* officials about these grievances. However, respondents in the focus group discussions felt strongly that nothing was done in response to their grievances. They also shared their grievances with people from outside these agencies, such as researchers and the media.

Some respondents in the focus group discussions shared that they opted to keep their grievances to themselves after the disasters, because they were afraid of possible rebuttal or the consequences of complaining against leaders and those in authority, such as worsening personal relationships with these leaders. For example, some people affected by Typhoon Haiyan were asked to sign a payroll to receive PHP30,000, but they did not ever get this. They did not complain, however, because they were afraid that they might be removed from the list of beneficiaries for other government programmes, such as the conditional cash programme for the poor.

Participation in disaster response and service provision

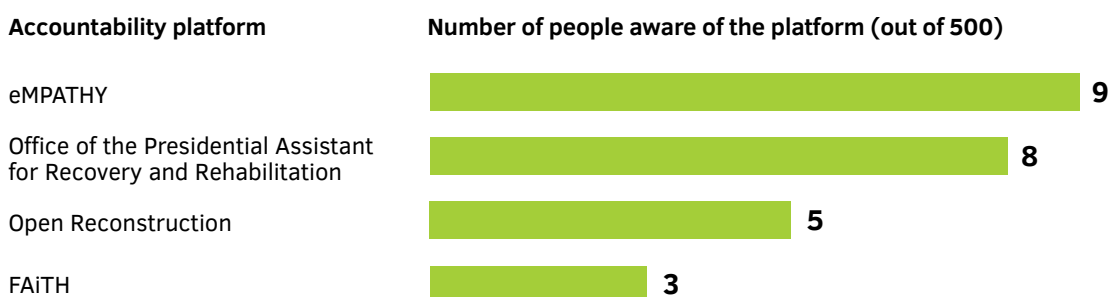
A few survey respondents acted as service providers during the response to Typhoon Haiyan, but they still considered themselves as needing assistance and services. In answering this question, they considered service providers to be the local government units, NGOs and other humanitarian organisations.

On a scale of 1–10, with 10 being the highest, survey respondents rated a series of statements related to their participation in the delivery of relief services. Figure 2 shows that while some respondents were given a chance to be involved and provide feedback related to the services they were receiving, not all participated. During the focus group discussions, participants stated that they felt that whatever they had to say would not be heard by the government, which is why most of them opted to wait for whatever support they received.

Awareness of national accountability platforms

The survey revealed that very few respondents were aware of the various national-level accountability platforms and measures (see Section 4), as Figure 3 shows. This was further confirmed during the validation of the research with communities, who all said that they did not know about these platforms.

Figure 3. Awareness of accountability platforms among affected communities



To improve the provision of services, respondents recommended that they should be allowed to provide clear information about what they need, and this should form the basis for determining the services that they receive. They also want to receive what is promised to them as quickly as possible.

5.2 Challenges and recommendations from respondents

Respondents were asked about the challenges they faced in securing proper services. In terms of services from *barangay* officials, these included having to meet too many requirements to get assistance, long waits for services to be delivered, and not being prioritised even if they were from vulnerable groups.

At the city and municipal government level, respondents faced challenges such as being directed back to their *barangays* or communities for assistance. Others were given promises of support but then did not receive this on time, and sometimes not at all. They were also asked to go back to their municipal or city hall – to no avail. Respondents faced these same problems when they approached the national government agencies.

To improve the provision of services, respondents recommended that they should be allowed to provide clear information about what they need, and this should form the basis for determining the services that they receive. They also want to receive what is promised to them as quickly as possible.

To improve access to information during and after disasters, respondents suggested that dissemination should be more localised. For example, *barangay*

Box 2. The impact of failing to deliver on promises

In November 2016, during the third anniversary of Typhoon Haiyan, President Duterte came to Tacloban and announced that all those who were affected would be given cash assistance. However, as of January 2017, people said that nothing had been given. During an interview, the Department of Social Welfare and Development clarified that only those who had not yet received any financial assistance would be given cash assistance. The problem was that expectations had already been raised by the president's promise.

Unfulfilled promises such as this pose a challenge for residents and community leaders, even long after a disaster had occurred. And as residents complain about the services they are promised but do not receive, community leaders lose their morale; they are caught in the middle, between the residents and the government agencies.

officials and local community leaders should be mobilised to provide accurate information to their communities. They wanted information to be provided through bulletins, house-to-house information campaigns from official sources, and via local news networks.

6. Findings and analysis

The research reviewed the many different tools, platforms and mechanisms that aim to increase accountability after disasters in the Philippines, including those established in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan (see Section 4) and those already in place. These are used across the different levels of government in the Philippines. While these tools, platforms and mechanisms were perceived as making humanitarian agencies and the government more accountable, our research found that the concept of accountability was greatly misconstrued in terms of information dissemination and reporting.

6.1 Making accountability operational at different governance levels

One focus of our research was to establish how accountability during disasters is operationalised by the Philippine government, a challenge that was greatly manifested during the Typhoon Haiyan response. The previous administration in the Philippines promoted accountability and transparency, highlighting the importance of these in the design of the tools, platforms and mechanisms created in response to Typhoon Haiyan.

The previous administration in the Philippines promoted accountability and transparency, highlighting the importance of these in the design of the tools, platforms and mechanisms created in response to Typhoon Haiyan. But in reality, those that were created were merely used for increasing transparency: there was no accountability framework which government agencies could adhere to and use as a guide to render themselves accountable to people during and after disasters.

But in reality, those that were created were merely used for increasing transparency: there was no accountability framework which government agencies could adhere to and use as a guide to render themselves accountable to people during and after disasters. Our research observed that the tools, platforms and mechanisms developed, and used by all levels of governance in the Philippines, served as platforms for information dissemination, reporting and monitoring only; they generally lacked features such as evaluation of community responses, which would enable them to check that their services were appropriate, relevant, effective, timely, coordinated and complementary – as required by the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (see Section 2).

National level

During the initial stages of the Typhoon Haiyan response, the national government struggled to come up with tools and platforms that would ensure the proper monitoring and reporting of services provided to communities. In the absence of such an accountability framework and platform, Typhoon Haiyan triggered a market for technology-based interventions and platforms seeking to operationalise accountability. While the concepts behind these were often good, their implementation and sustainability were not. This is particularly true of the online platforms that were created, most of which have already been closed (e.g. eMPATHY and FAiTH).

National agencies also designed platforms and tools to make local government units accountable to the national government for the projects they implemented in their localities during Typhoon Haiyan. Many included internal mechanisms and processes to ensure accountability and transparency. For example, through data from OpenBUB, the Department of Budget and Management could sanction local government units and end bottom-up budgeting support.

Tracking projects across agencies, which have different internal policies and focuses, became an issue for those managing accountability platforms. There were also

issues with different understandings of core themes, because the relief and recovery projects were diverse: for example, they lacked a common understanding on what “building back better” means at the national level.

Further, the Office of the Presidential Assistant for Recovery and Rehabilitation lacked the mandate to require national government agencies and humanitarian organisations to report their response interventions. Because of the overwhelming scale of the emergency, everyday government processes, such as coordination and reporting, were set aside – thus accountability in general was neglected. The national agencies involved in rehabilitation work that were interviewed in this research admitted to the lack of a standard communication process and protocol, which greatly hindered collaboration.

During the response to Typhoon Haiyan, the disconnect between the national and local levels also became evident in the national-level systems created to monitor project implementation. Political dynamics happening between national and local government officials affected the sustainability of established accountability mechanisms, which was attributed to local officials belonging to different political parties than national officials. In some cases, local governments refused to submit their data on the platforms and opted to share their reports directly with the people using traditional tools (e.g. bulletin boards, community meetings, published reports). Thus, monitoring from the national level on interventions happening at the local level and assessing their accuracy through the reports became difficult. This also caused some budget allocation concerns, as some needs may have already been met at the local level, but local chief executives were still requesting additional support from national agencies.

Local level

While it is recognised that local government units prepared for the incoming disaster of Typhoon Haiyan through information dissemination and the preparation of relief goods and evacuation centres, its unexpected magnitude overwhelmed their capacities. At the same

There is no effective mechanism to challenge local officials who violate procedures or fail to deliver promised services. There are several laws concerning public officials, and cases can be filed against them, but in most cases corruption remains at the level of rumour and litigation cases are rarely filed.

time, both emergency and regular staff and their families were themselves adversely affected by the typhoon. This left the emergency response mechanisms and the governance system in chaos, as the local officials did not know how to proceed after such a huge disaster.

Development agencies that came to help during and after the disaster observed the inconsistency and unreliability of the local government units in implementing DRR programmes and projects. The implementation of structures and platforms at the local level was inconsistent and / or unreliable, for example with a lack of knowledge on the status of projects. Based on the interviews, feedback from communities was not usually accepted positively by staff in local government units.

During our research, some community members were critical of the local administration, saying too much politics is in play in the implementation of DRRM programmes. In resettlement programmes, for example, the local government unit executive selects the beneficiaries. People complained that those who are close to political leaders were the ones who received housing units or were prioritised in the selection process. Yet there is no effective mechanism to challenge local officials who violate procedures or fail to deliver promised services. While there are several laws concerning public officials, and cases can be filed against them, in most cases corruption remains at the level of rumour and litigation cases are rarely filed.

Similarly, it is difficult to challenge gaps between what was promised and what was delivered. In a post-disaster housing project in Leyte, for example, no sanctions or penalties were made against the local government unit even when its plans were unfulfilled, wholly or partially, or were changed by the duty bearers (Co *et al.* 2016).

Indeed, patronage politics plays out very strongly in DRRM. Those who are against local politicians are very vocal among themselves, and with external people such as researchers, but they refuse to bring up their grievances openly with officials. They just say “*Wala namang mangyayari dyan, bakit pa?*”, which means “Nothing will happen on the complaint, so why complain?” For poor people who feel they do not get the services due to them, speaking out against local

politicians is a dangerous act, and they fear retaliation; they would rather be silent than face a powerful enemy.

Non-state actors

Non-state actors such as CSOs, NGOs and private groups have overarching accountability responsibilities. These not only cover their own organisation’s accountability; they are also expected by communities to ensure the accountability of other actors, such as local governments. Communicating consistently with communities is particularly important for non-state actors. It helps communities to understand why certain decisions are being made by leaders and in projects. It also helps them to appreciate accountability processes. And, because of their long presence in many communities – often spanning years of grass-roots work – many non-state actors have developed relationships of trust with community members, which further renders them with the role of delivering and monitoring accountability.

Non-state actors’ activities relating to accountability include: monitoring and evaluation; response activities; delivering systems and mechanisms that ensure information and service provision; handling complaints and feedback mechanisms; coordination with other organisations that deal with assistance to affected populations; communication with communities; the submission of reports to other organisations; analysing community feedback; and establishing partnerships with other organisations and local government units.

One of the leading non-state mechanisms employed during and after Typhoon Haiyan was the Community of Practice on Community Engagement (see Section 4.5). This has several members, including INGOs, local government, CSOs, NGOs, church organisations, media development organisations and telecommunication companies. The combined knowledge and experience brought together in this network contributed to an effective, coordinated communications response from among the members of the Community of Practice, and provided cultural context and connections within communities, on which relief efforts were able to build.

As discussed earlier, the Community of Practice evolved from the Communication with Communities technical working group. Regular interaction and strong, transparent leadership in this earlier body helped

Trust is usually established once the delivery of services becomes consistent.

to address and overcome issues of power between the many agencies involved. Further, it strengthened relationships, which made coordination easier. In some cases, it led to direct collaboration in community engagement activities.

Yet while the non-state actors involved in relief efforts were able to create a framework for accountability in their engagements, it is not always easy to navigate accountability issues on the ground. One of the crucial challenges became evident during the start of projects in response to Typhoon Haiyan, when they were yet to secure the trust of the key people in some communities. At this stage, the willingness to listen and cooperate is not always present among communities. However, trust is usually established once the delivery of services becomes consistent. Other challenges include people's refusal to cooperate and listen, and information that is difficult to verify. In these cases, separating 'noise' from real evidence is important.

There were notable challenges in ensuring that non-state actors were accountable to the affected communities in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. First, non-state actors usually followed their own standards for accountability, as part of their organisational mandate and policies. These are often limited to being accountable or reporting to their donors and funders on the status of the response, but not necessarily evaluating the quality of the services delivered. Second, while most organisations have created specific staff roles responsible for accountability in their programmes, such as accountability officers and feedback managers, these tasks are mainly for compliance and reporting. Lastly, since there was no clear accountability framework, some non-state actors did not directly link with the local government or provide information in the accountability platforms created, instead going directly to the communities to provide their services and information – despite being encouraged to coordinate with the government when providing services during disasters to prevent gaps and duplications. Thus, it was difficult for the local government and even other non-state actors to track who was providing what.

Community level

For affected communities, information is vital – before a disaster event and during the aftermath – to help them understand what is going on (see Box 1). Unfortunately, in the case of Typhoon Haiyan, while they could access information from various sources, they did not have the same opportunities to provide feedback – meaning they could not play their role in ensuring accountability.

People in the affected areas mostly communicate and access information through the television, radio and mobile phones. A small number have access to the Internet. But during the immediate post-disaster phase, there was no electricity and communication was difficult. At these times, people relied heavily on mobile phones to access information, as there were places where they could charge batteries. But while mobiles are effective tools for receiving information, it is difficult to use them for sending complaints or questions about the disaster response. Mobile phone numbers are not registered in the Philippines and there were cases of emergency hotlines receiving prank callers and threats instead of being able to address real disaster relief inquiries.

Active community participation was undeniably missing in the conceptualisation, implementation and monitoring of the accountability platforms developed in response to Typhoon Haiyan. Indeed, it is apparent from our research that the people affected were not involved in the process of planning relief programmes more widely, from conceptualisation to implementation. This helps to explain the lack of access for affected communities to many of the information platforms set up. Often, the target users for these are more educated people who can understand complicated reports, matrices and procedures, and the language that is often used on these portals. Yet the ultimate beneficiaries of information transparency should be the community – the people who are directly affected. They are not being effectively reached by these tools, platforms and mechanisms, nor providing feedback via them.

6.2 Accountability criteria in the tools, platforms and mechanisms developed

The organisations engaged in this research shared, through key informant interviews, how they practised accountability and how their organisations understood it to be playing out through the different tools, platforms and mechanisms developed. Technology played an important role in many of those used, especially in reaching out to the general public. For example, smart phones were not just used for sending short message service (SMS) messages and calls; they were also used as a tool for conducting surveys. Similarly, computers were used to establish a database that would record and analyse feedback.

Interviewees understood accountability to be the provision of information to affected communities and receiving feedback from them during Typhoon Haiyan, but

Table 1. Evaluation of accountability platforms used during Typhoon Haiyan

Criterion	Is the criterion observable in the content and design of the platform?			
	eMPATHY	FAiTH	OpenBUB	Open Reconstruction
1. Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant	No	No	No	No
2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely	No	No	No	No
3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects	No	No	No	No
4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	Limited, through email only	No	Limited, through email only	Limited, through email only
5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed	No	No	No	No
6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	No	No	No	No
7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve	No	No	No	No
8. Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably	No	No	No	No
9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

not necessarily monitoring and evaluating the services being delivered to communities. Also, it seemed that there was confusion about whether these measures were undertaken to increase accountability and transparency. Most of the tools, platforms and mechanisms that were established before, and in response to, Typhoon Haiyan were primarily for information dissemination and communicating with different audiences, rather than specifically to increase accountability.

We analysed the platforms described in Section 4 to see if their content observed the nine criteria of the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (see Section 1). Table 1 summarises this analysis.

All the platforms evaluated lacked the capacity to assess the quality of disaster responses, particularly in terms of their appropriateness, relevance, effectiveness and timeliness (criteria 1 and 2). eMPATHY, FAiTH, Open Reconstruction and OpenBUB allowed relief organisations to submit their reports online. But while these platforms were designed to promote accountability, they functioned more as platforms for transparency. The information made available in these websites was very general and only provided the 'big picture' of the response efforts. As well as disseminating information, most of these tools were also used for monitoring and reporting purposes.

Based on this evaluation, we also assessed other tools, platforms and mechanisms that were designed to observe accountability and transparency during Typhoon Haiyan such as websites, social media sites, face-to-face communication, mass media and targeted campaigns.

Communication, participation and feedback: organisational websites

All the organisations involved in disaster relief have their own websites, which are usually used to share information on what the organisation is about, the services that they offer, their programmes and projects, and updates on events and accomplishments. Government websites are also very particular about sharing official government reports. For instance, the Department of Social Welfare and Development's website publishes reports on its relief efforts whenever there is an emergency.

However, organisation websites are limited as an accountability tool during emergencies, since they are usually flooded with various information about both the emergency response and the organisation's regular activities. Secondly, the information posted is often delayed, as most organisations have protocols about how to publish information and require a day

or more for material to be published. Further, our research with communities found that they rarely access organisational websites or send inquiries via them – especially during emergencies, when they need real-time information.

Communication, participation and feedback: social media

The use of social media to disseminate information and promote accountability became prevalent during the recovery efforts after Typhoon Haiyan. Almost all organisations and agencies have their own social media accounts, particularly a Facebook page and a Twitter account. In interviews, key informants explained how they post regular updates on their interventions and services via their social media account, thus these provide more timely information than their websites. Even before Typhoon Haiyan, the Philippine government had issued specific hashtags for use during emergencies. In fact, an online map²⁶ showing the interventions and calls for assistance was created during Typhoon Haiyan based on Twitter hashtags from across, and even outside of, the country.

Some organisational social media accounts are managed by Manila-based staff, however. As a result, issues that were happening in affected areas were not always highlighted. Furthermore, like websites, the social media accounts were used for multiple purposes – posting regular events and news, as well as interventions related to Typhoon Haiyan. This meant they were not a focused source of information. And because social media feeds occur in real time, some issues were overwhelmed with posts as they came about, while others were not covered at all. Lastly, social media accounts were not always a reliable source of information about services being delivered to communities, as in many places communities disagreed with the information in the social media posts.

Social media, if managed effectively and properly, could have given the communities a better opportunity to send feedback on the quality of the services received than the online platforms developed (e.g. eMPATHY, FAiTH). But while effective in widespread information dissemination, the use of social media as an accountability platform has limitations. For example, after Typhoon Haiyan, hashtags were often used improperly (despite some useful examples such as the online map), with people not coming from affected areas posting messages and using these hashtags to mark posts not directly relevant to the situation. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the issues raised will be addressed; the Facebook pages of government agencies were flooded with complaints, but there was either a delay in responses or an absence of staff to actually look at and respond to these grievances.

The question of Internet access – essential to using social media – also needs consideration. Even before Typhoon Haiyan's first landfall, some of the provinces along its path had their electricity cut off, leaving many affected areas with no Internet connection. Consequently, most social media posts about the disaster came from relatives living elsewhere, who were communicating with their families in affected areas via mobile phones or telephone.

Communication, participation and feedback: face-to-face communication

In the response to Typhoon Haiyan, face-to-face communication between those providing relief and communities happened in the following ways: (1) house visits or office interactions, used for requesting resources; (2) community consultations for receiving information and raising collective concerns; and (3) office walk-ins, used for follow-up meetings or confrontation when people were being ignored by other channels (Ong, Flores and Combinido 2015; Smith, Ong and Routley 2015; Hartmann, Rhoades and Santo 2014; CDAC Network 2014a). People received direct information mostly from local leaders and CSOs.

Most government agencies and some CSOs also provided information using bulletin boards in *barangay*, municipal or city halls. These allowed the public to read reports and announcements on services being provided during the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. Most agencies felt that posting reports on bulletin boards increases the transparency and accountability of their actions. But this approach is limited as bulletin boards are not always updated regularly and they are usually used as a one-way information source; very few allow people to give feedback. Access is also limited, as people can only get information when they go to the halls.

Based on the focus group discussions, communities prefer receiving information through these face-to-face interactions, particularly from people in authority. Communities trust the information they are receiving when *barangay* leaders, municipal officials or local leaders are the ones providing it, for example about the frequency and type of services that they are supposed to receive. As well as direct communication with *barangay* leaders, face-to-face communication with family, friends and neighbours is important to communities (CDAC Network 2014b).

Aside from being an opportunity to actually receive a response, people felt they could 'pull the heartstrings' of the responders during face-to-face communication, and that they would be able to get more aid if humanitarian agency staff were able to empathise with them (CDAC Network 2014b).

²⁶ See: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/11/131108-typhoon-haiyan-philippines-crisis-mapping>

Another direct form of communication used is disaster family access cards, which can be considered as an effective tool in monitoring the quality of responses. The Department of Social Welfare and Development issues these during emergencies and, during the Haiyan response, these were used to monitor which families had received emergency shelter assistance from the government. Having a card not only enables the government to monitor how many families have been attended to, it also allows families to ask for support if they have not received assistance. The cards were limited to monitoring the Department of Social Welfare and Development's programme, though, and did not provide any information about the quality of the assistance people were receiving, just the quantity of people covered.

Face-to-face interaction was a good way to encourage the use of feedback mechanisms and provide immediate responses to complaints. Targeted communities, where agency workers were embedded, reported more frequent use of feedback mechanisms, as people had developed a trust in an agency. In turn, these embedded staff were able to manage the community's fears of making complaints and clarify that sending feedback would not result in their future exclusion from interventions, but would help improve programme delivery (Ong *et al.* 2015).

Box 3. Challenges with face-to-face communication

While direct personal communication is a useful approach, especially at the local level, and often preferred by communities, there is sometimes a question of the quality of information being conveyed via local leaders. During our interviews with local leaders, they explained that some of the information they pass on is relayed from those higher up in terms of authority. But when services are not received, or not of good quality, they are the ones who are blamed or questioned by communities.

Direct communication is not always ideal for humanitarian organisations either. Following an emergency, many experience serious limitations in being able to communicate with affected populations through labour-intensive face-to-face approaches (Hartmann *et al.* 2014). But while it might be time-consuming and not always cost-effective, it is still very useful, as staff are able to establish a personal relationship with community members, making the recipients of their services feel more comfortable about airing their concerns. This approach also makes it possible for staff to verify the claims being made by a community (e.g. the status of resources).

One form of face-to-face communication that was less popular was community consultations. Affected communities reported that events such as these were not necessarily used to the best effect, and were often used for one-way communication, such as informing people about programmes. Some also reported having 'consultation fatigue', due to the large number of humanitarian agencies doing focus group discussions and consultations (Ong *et al.* 2015; Smith *et al.* 2015).

Further to those described, Smith *et al.* (2015) identified the following channels of face-to-face communication as being used by humanitarian organisations during the response to Typhoon Haiyan to establish two-way communications and obtain feedback from affected communities: field visits by staff; community assemblies / consultations; suggestion and complaint boxes; and help desks.

Communication, participation and feedback: mass media

Mass media (e.g. television, radio, newspapers) remains one of the main sources of information for communities affected by disasters. Similar to other emergencies, radio was the preferred and most accessible media channel during the Haiyan response (Smith *et al.* 2015; Hartmann *et al.* 2014; CDAC Network 2014b). Before Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines, most of the people living along its path relied on television and radio for news; "radios could be used by larger groups of people in common spaces such as *barangay* halls" (CDAC 2014a: 18).

Several different organisations used radio broadcasts to convey information. The *Pamati Kita* campaign used Radio Abante, a community radio provider which broadcast programmes about the humanitarian response and invited listeners to phone in and discuss their concerns with agency staff. It also used comics to inform people about the interventions (Jacobs 2015).

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) also used Radio Abante to broadcast, along with several talk shows, the *Tindog Kita* radio drama. This ten-part radio drama, broadcast five times a week, integrated key information on the most pressing concerns being faced by families and communities – including how to build safer, more resilient homes, and health and psychological problems and protection issues – with psychosocial support that was achieved through entertainment. At the end of each episode, listeners were encouraged to answer questions through SMS and send feedback.

Generally, people saw the campaigns as positive. Female community members reported learning a lot from the radio drama, although its link to behaviour change is uncertain. The interactive talk show encouraged listeners during a very difficult situation. It also enabled two-way communication, but it is

important to note that Radio Abante, as a community radio, has only limited reach as compared to commercial radio stations. Although humanitarian radio broadcasts can be a key source of information and discussion in affected areas, their reach and resources are limited and thus require greater investment and focus in future responses (CDAC Network 2014a).

Further, despite the popularity of some of these shows, communities felt that the mass media was not able to provide them with information as often as they wanted or needed. In the survey, respondents wanted information about relief services to be provided daily, but mass media during Typhoon Haiyan was only used intermittently to share information about relief efforts, with television still mostly being used for regular programmes.

When considering how the various types of mass media could be enhanced, it is important to understand the information and communications problems in the areas struck by Typhoon Haiyan. Wigley (2015) reports the following issues, which could help the design of future communications and accountability campaigns immediately after disasters.

- During the first few days after Typhoon Haiyan, people were cut off from their usual sources of information and communication, including television, radio and print media.
- Adults found the lack of both general news and specific information about the response a significant source of anguish.
- People highlighted the need for telephones and radios, and the means to recharge them, so they could receive information.

Communication, participation and feedback: targeted campaigns

Among the many communications campaigns launched during the Haiyan response, two were particularly aimed at improving accountability to affected populations: the *Tindog Kita* (Rise Together) campaign by the IOM (see previous discussion), and the *Pamati Kita* (Let's Listen Together) campaign by the IOM, World Vision International and Plan International.

The idea of the *Pamati Kita* campaign was to provide common channels through which communities could communicate with humanitarian agencies. Conceptualised a month after Typhoon Haiyan struck, the people behind the campaign saw that agencies kept on setting up individual channels of communication with communities, resulting in the duplication of efforts and 'consultation fatigue'. This proposed solution aimed to avoid duplication and reduce confusion among communities, and to encourage a coordinated approach to responding to community feedback (Jacobs 2015).

The campaign built a common set of services offered jointly by the humanitarian agencies in the field, which included: (1) a public information campaign outlining the agencies' major commitments to communities, together with contact details and actions that communities could take if the agencies fell short of their commitments; (2) a joint hotline that allowed community members to ask questions, lodge complaints and get answers; and (3) combined analysis of feedback data, to allow each agency to benefit from all the data generated. Undertaking a combined analysis of feedback data also allowed agencies to view the overall response and recovery programme, as well as compare their feedback to other agencies (Ibid.).

The agencies involved developed common feedback tools to get the general, broad insights from the communities' feedback on the work being done. Short standard questions, which considered the Sphere Core Standards and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership Standards, were designed to generate quantitative and qualitative data. A common methodology for community consultations was also agreed, with a focus on dialogue and using a standardised reporting format for consistency.

Also under this campaign, training events were held to build the capacity within humanitarian agencies in terms of accountability. These built on the IOM's community response map, an online data platform to track and respond to community feedback. Documenting actions was given importance, as this enabled agencies to replicate best practices and improve on lapses (Ibid.).

6.3 Common challenges in achieving accountability

Responding to complaints

As this discussion highlights, several different tools, platforms and mechanisms were used during Typhoon Haiyan to foster communication, participation and feedback, including complaints. Despite this, there were limited spaces for people to receive immediate action in response to their complaints.

One joint output from the Accountability to Affected Populations and Communications with Communities technical working groups was the development of community feedback forms, a mechanism introduced to consolidate the community feedback being collected in different ways by various humanitarian agencies (CDAC Network 2014a). It was assumed that once this feedback was properly and systematically organised, it could be more effectively communicated to decision-makers and result in improvements to aid delivery and programming. It was also hoped that this approach would: ensure feedback was passed to the appropriate agency or cluster; reduce the duplication

of interventions and communities suffering from consultation fatigue; and promote a culture of cooperation and transparency among humanitarian agencies. Figure 4 shows how the process worked in affected areas of Tacloban.

The community feedback forms provided a mechanism for organisations to look at how they were working together, share feedback in a more structured way, ensuring that the feedback had greater depth and greater coverage. It also meant feedback was shared in a less biased way than, for example, during cluster meetings when a representative of an organisation will share feedback in the absence of the concerned agency. The mechanism also provided an opportunity for humanitarian agencies to improve their programming and provide feedback to decision-makers about what information the communities really needed. The challenge, however, was making sure that the feedback was accurate and sent back to the decision-makers, and that the action made was appropriate.

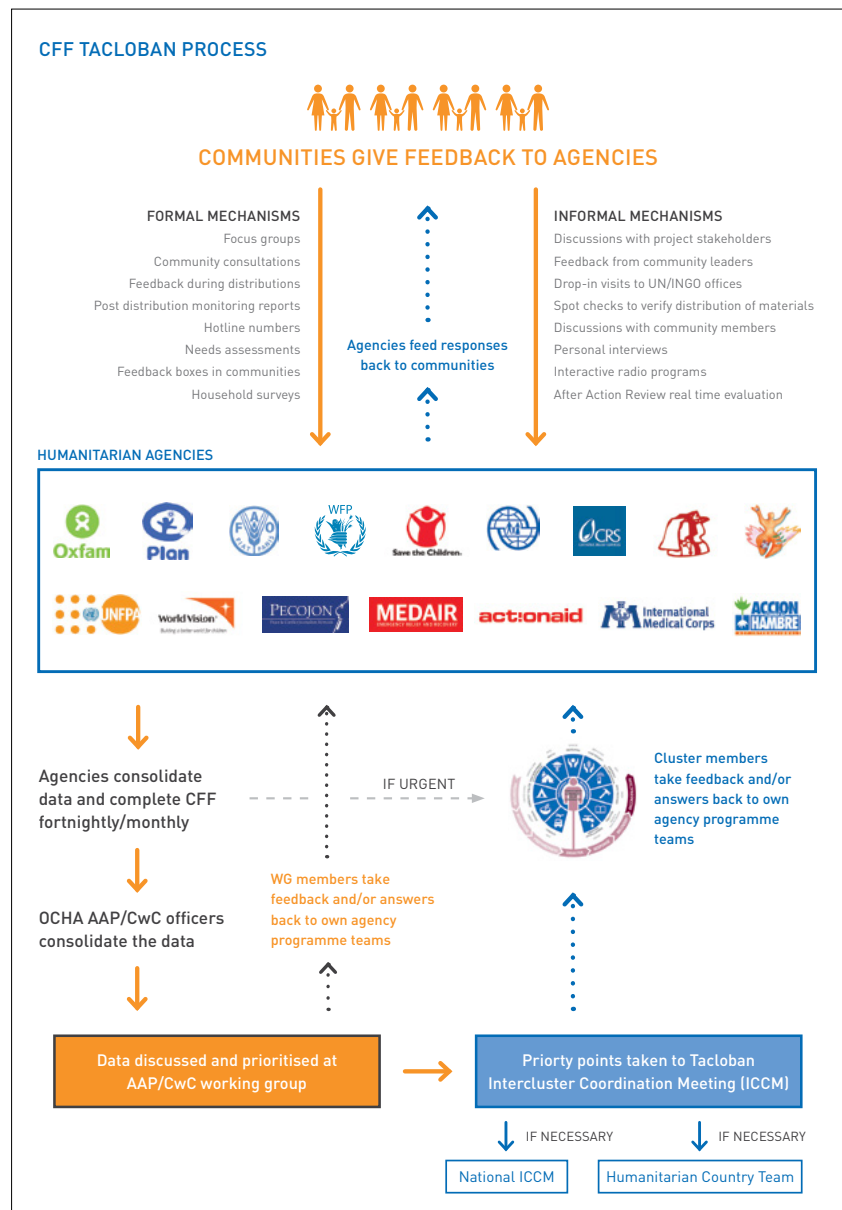
Achieving coordinated and complementary responses

All of the tools, platforms and mechanisms discussed were designed to provide information on government interventions and projects for disaster response, and to ensure that responses were well-coordinated and complementary. The reports produced from the platforms were supposed to be used by the concerned agencies to identify gaps and overlaps, and allow them to address these with other sectors or agencies. The challenge, however, was ensuring that all agencies were committed to submitting information about their services. Based on our interviews, some agencies and organisations did not use these platforms, preferring to either use or develop their own.

Effective management of resources

Humanitarian tools, platforms and mechanisms that were established during Typhoon Haiyan were designed to make sure that the public are aware of how resources are being managed and used. But in the absence of a uniform monitoring and evaluation mechanism for disaster response, the government

Figure 4. The community feedback form (CFF) used in Tacloban



Source: Reproduced with permission from CDAC Network (2014b)

and even non-state humanitarian actors struggle to manage their combined resources effectively. There are several challenges to making the platforms described in Section 4 more effective at monitoring how resources are being used.

Firstly, the accuracy of the data. The platforms evaluated relied on information coming from local governments, which is then submitted to provincial, regional and national government agencies. At the local level, there are no clear mechanisms to check the reliability of the data. The use of bulletin boards has been the traditional way of local governments of informing the public of how funds are being used, but this too is not very reliable and these are not always used by the public.

As discussed, each agency has its own requirements and mechanisms for reporting how funds are being used. For example, the Commission on Audit releases an audit report on fund utilisation for all government agencies, including during disasters, but this is not real-time information. The online platforms created were supposed to provide such real-time information, but this was not possible due to delays in agencies completing their own internal reporting. The platforms could be more useful if each level of government or organisation managed its own page in one platform, using the same format. This would, for example, allow users to identify which local government units and organisations are not submitting their reports.

Lastly, humanitarian agencies have their own accountabilities, especially in reporting how their funds are used. Thus, without an agreement between the government and humanitarian organisations on how to measure and monitor accountabilities, it will be difficult to require all agencies to submit their reports in the same way or with the same regularity.

Missing accountability criteria

Using the Core Humanitarian Standards as a reference, six of the nine criteria were missing in the content and design of many of the tools, platforms and approaches used. Criteria 1, 2 and 6, which discuss the quality of the humanitarian response – which is supposed to be appropriate, relevant, effective, timely, coordinated and complementary – were not observed in any of the tools, platforms and mechanisms. Having online systems and allowing communities to be involved in humanitarian coordination could have helped in achieving these criteria, especially in monitoring the types of interventions being provided, if they were timely, and well-coordinated. Criterion 8, on support given to humanitarian staff from both government and non-state actors providing support to affected areas, was also missing. This could be achieved via the development of a database, which could help the public know and check if the people providing them support are legitimate.

Furthermore, this database could enable humanitarian staff share feedback on their own experiences of working with the government, other agencies and communities. It is important to ensure that the actors themselves are protected and are well cared for.

Furthermore, continuous learning and improvement (criterion 7) and strengthening of local capacities (criterion 3) are vital to make service providers accountable. The platforms in the case studies have no space to allow users to learn from the responses received and improve their activities. It is only direct engagements – such as face-to-face communication and community feedback forms – that allow responders to learn from their mistakes and listen to feedback.

6.4 Accountability to non-beneficiaries

In designing accountability tools, platforms and mechanisms, it is important to identify the levels of accountability and to whom responders are accountable to. Apart from the beneficiaries, a disaster also affects wider groups in any population.

Most widely, it is the general public's interest to know the services that are being provided to disaster-affected areas, primarily since taxpayers' money is being used to fund these. Most of the platforms were designed without the need to register, making them accessible to the general public.

Affected non-beneficiaries – those who have been affected by a disaster but have not received relief or assistance – are an important group in any post-disaster situation. Months after a disaster, when Internet connections have been restored, these people can access the same web-based accountability platforms for disaster response and rehabilitation as the general public. Beyond this, the mass media – which generally targets a wide audience – is an important channel for broadcasting significant information on projects and their status in areas affected by disasters.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

During the emergency response efforts to Typhoon Haiyan, the government and humanitarian organisations made efforts to be accountable to the populations affected. Several tools, platforms and mechanisms were developed to improve accountability, transparency and communication with communities. However, no single government agency took responsibility for reporting on relief efforts, for example the overall use of funds for relief efforts. And, although there were systems in place, the use of these was not

maximised, and they did not enable the main target users – affected communities – to view the response and recovery efforts as a complete picture.

The accountability platforms evaluated in this research were designed to provide a way for people and organisations to obtain information about disaster response and disaster risk reduction programmes in general, thus enabling their users to use knowledge as a basis for advocacy, criticism and making proposals

It is not enough to be transparent. What is crucial is how people can use information to make the power holders aware of what should be done and enforce actions.

for improvements to programmes. However, these platforms lacked important elements that would render them useful as accountability tools. The survey conducted showed that very few members of the community were aware of these platforms. Decisions about how to respond to these ‘voices from below’ and what action to take remained in the hands of ‘power holders’, such as implementing agencies and government officials. For example, our research found no case in which the people or organisations used the information available from the accountability platforms to file legal cases to settle disputes or enforce decisions. Rather, there was a large number of criticisms about the information available, which expressed dissatisfaction or dissent, for example that there were no sanctions or penalties made for enforcing corrective actions – an absence of ‘teeth’.²⁷

It is not enough to be transparent. What is crucial is how people can use information to make the power holders aware of what should be done and enforce actions.

7.1 Setting up an empowering accountability framework during disasters

Before Typhoon Haiyan, the Philippines had DRRM legislation, a designated office handling disaster responses through the Office of Civil Defense, and a council composed of government agencies mandated to work together before, during and after an emergency. These components were, however, severely put to the test during the disaster. What this event revealed was lacking was a clear-cut accountability framework to ensure that: (1) all actors are accountable to the affected population; (2) all affected populations are taken into account; and (3) actors who fail to deliver what they are mandated or have promised to do will be held accountable, to the people and other stakeholders.

Smith *et al.* (2015) report that accountability in the Philippines during disasters has often been more apparent on paper than in practice, and that progress has been rather limited, focusing mostly on technical tools rather than the soft skills, such as listening and facilitation, that are essential for having a dialogue and changing the relationship between agencies

and affected communities. Supporting this, our research highlighted the need for more interventions based on face-to-face communication with proper documentation.

Our research also showed how disempowered the affected communities felt, not just because of the tragedy that was the typhoon, but also due to the lack of a strong accountability mechanism that would enable them to communicate their needs and assert these. Consequently, their participation and ‘voice’ in the crafting of accountability tools, platforms and mechanisms used were minimal, if not completely absent. Part of this sense of being left out was attributed to the existing politicisation of the delivery of disaster response interventions. Thus, having clear, well-defined checks and balances as part of an accountability framework will hopefully protect communities when they express their needs and feedback on the services they are receiving.

7.2 Appropriateness and relevance of accountability tools, platforms and mechanisms

The government accountability and transparency tools, platforms and mechanisms described in this report displayed many shortcomings. Generally, the government’s mechanisms for coordination, monitoring and reporting were weak. The systems for planning, budgeting, the disbursement of funds, project implementation, accounting and auditing need to be improved and tightened to achieve sustainable and effective monitoring and evaluation. For example, there was discord in the government’s financial management system, which undermined the possibility of having an effective monitoring system to link the outcomes, outputs and accomplishments of each project to the budgets and expenditures across agencies (World Bank GFDRR *et al.* 2015). However, it is worth noting that many of the tools implemented were viewed as pilot platforms that could be improved upon over time, together with changes to institutional arrangements.

The Office for the Presidential Assistant on Rehabilitation and Recovery should have played a greater role in facilitating partnerships between local and international stakeholders during relief and

²⁷ ‘Teeth’ here is shorthand for government capacity for responsiveness, following Fox (2014).

Our research also showed how disempowered the affected communities felt, not just because of the tragedy that was the typhoon, but also due to the lack of a strong accountability mechanism that would enable them to communicate their needs and assert these.

recovery initiatives. This would have helped to ensure better communication and harmonised efforts between the implementers and the affected communities. The duplication of efforts and overlapping responsibilities could have been prevented, or reduced, through better coordination.

The Office could also have been given greater authority to respond to complex issues concerning rehabilitation and recovery, given its massive scope. Further, its participatory mechanisms on the ground need to be strengthened, notably through better avenues for community participation in the design and implementation of rehabilitation projects and programmes.

7.3 Communication, participation, feedback and complaints

Larger, more intensive campaigns on accountability to affected populations and communication with communities should be done in future DRR and response efforts, focusing not only on communities, but also on social mobilisation, policy advocacy and behaviour change. During the Typhoon Haiyan experience, there were many 'small' accountability campaigns by humanitarian organisations, but the number of these resulted in fatigue among community members. In the future, it would be better to have a unified campaign, ideally led by the government and supported by humanitarian organisations. This would also be more cost-effective for the organisations involved.

In terms of reaching out to communities and establishing two-way communication, campaigns should not be one-off events, but integrated into wider programmes, with an emphasis on the use of face-to-face communication, integrated with with use of the media.

7.4 General recommendations

Based on our research findings, we recommend that the Philippines creates an 'accountability during disasters' framework to allow government and non-government agencies to reflect on and apply the necessary revisions in current policies that will improve the delivery of their services during and

after future disaster events. The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability and its Nine Commitments can be fully adopted, adapted to local conditions and harmonised with the current good governance frameworks being observed by the present administration.

Such a framework will also be useful for the design of accountability tools and platforms that can be used prior to, during and after future disasters. It is important for the national DRRM agencies to involve local government units, community leaders and community-based DRRM organisations in the development of this framework, to ensure that communities' voices are heard and integrated into this.

The relevance of the government's online platforms, such as eMPATHY and FAiTH, during and after disaster events remains open to question, especially in terms of whether they are being used by the public as intended. There must be a thorough discussion among different stakeholders on the usefulness and sustainability of having online accountability tools used during disaster response efforts.

While the Community Engagement Community of Practice offers a process for establishing and running such online communications platforms in the future, there are a number of considerations for the Community of Practice to manage these platforms. Firstly, we recommend that the government takes ownership of such mechanisms to ensure that both government and non-government humanitarian actors use it responsibly, and sustain it by having regulations for use, designated staff and sufficient funds. Secondly, for the Community Engagement Community of Practice to assist the government in the consultation, design and management of these platforms.

Furthermore, we recommend that the Republic Act 10121 is amended so that its implementing rules and regulations include: (1) a clear definition of what accountability to disaster-affected population is; (2) concrete mechanisms to ensure accountability to disaster-affected communities at various levels; and (3) details of who will implement the checks and balances of all humanitarian agencies and actors providing disaster relief and services to affected populations.

Specific recommendations are as follows.

- The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, through the Office of Civil Defense, should create and implement a DRRM and disaster response monitoring and reporting framework that supports and rationalises individual agencies' monitoring and reporting of their accomplishments. According to the UNDP,²⁸ data requirements requested from agencies during emergencies should be aligned with each agency's existing monitoring and evaluation tools. Since many agencies have their own planning tools and management information systems, they took some persuading and orientation to adopt the eMPATHY data templates.
- The Council should work with the newly established Department of Information and Communication Technology to create an inter-agency disaster response and monitoring system that can easily tap into individual agency databases (e.g. the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Disaster Response Operations Monitoring and Information Center).
- The Council should consult with council members and humanitarian agencies to determine who should be responsible for the overall management and leadership of the Community of Practice for Community Engagement on the government side, and how to integrate accountability within all its clusters. Both the Council and the Community of Practice should conduct a nationwide orientation and consultation with local government units and communities on accountability to disaster-affected communities, as ownership of the system and its processes can only be established if all stakeholders are involved.
- The Council should review the current role of the Philippine Information Agency to see how it can better support information dissemination, the generation of feedback and reporting to communities.
- The Office of Civil Defense, with the Department of Information and Communication Technology, should map all existing and still operational technology-based disaster relief monitoring systems and evaluate which can be used in case of a sudden-onset disaster.
- It should work with the with Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Department of Interior and Local Government to map traditional community-based monitoring mechanisms for disaster relief.
- The Open Reconstruction platform is dependent on the data uploaded to it by the agencies involved. Without consistent updates, the platform quickly becomes outdated. It is therefore necessary to ensure that all agencies and local government units commit to using the platform, and that the Office of Civil Defense processes all reconstruction requests, working with the National Economic Development Authority. This is not yet the case, because currently only the latter agency is processing the requests.²⁹
- The Office of Civil Defense and the Department of Interior and Local Government should go back to the local government units, especially the local chief executives, to discuss the whole DRRM framework and how information about this should flow.
- The Office should coordinate with the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council and humanitarian partners to set up guidelines on information dissemination and handling feedback using the different media platforms that are being used to share information and receive feedback (e.g. the use of social media to receive complaints).

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About Making All Voices Count

Making All Voices Count is a programme working towards a world in which open, effective and participatory governance is the norm and not the exception. It focuses global attention on creative and cutting-edge solutions to transform the relationship between citizens and their governments. The programme is inspired by and supports the goals of the Open Government Partnership.

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Research, Evidence and Learning component

The programme's Research, Evidence and Learning component, managed by IDS, contributes to improving performance and practice, and builds an evidence base in the field of citizen voice, government responsiveness, transparency and accountability (T&A) and technology for T&A (Tech4T&A).

About CDP

The Center for Disaster Preparedness (CDP) is a regional resource centre based in the Philippines that endeavours to promote community-based climate and disaster risk reduction and management through its core programmes: (1) training and capacity development; (2) research, knowledge exchange and management; (3) advocacy, partnership and networking; (4) projects and partnerships; and (5) humanitarian preparedness and response. Using 'hand-holding' and mentoring approaches, it works with government and non-government organisations, people's organisation, communities and international agencies in various countries to enhance their capacities in disaster prevention and mitigation, preparedness, emergency response, and rehabilitation and recovery.

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