

Kent and Melissa Canoy in their sari-sari store. © WFP/Martin Winkler



### Message from the Resident Coordinator

In March, we marked 100 days after Typhoon Rai (local name: Odette). To date, humanitarian organizations have implemented 11,000 multi-sectoral interventions to support the government's Odette response, despite the funding shortfall, and the impact of Typhoon Megi (local name: Agaton) in April on many of the same Odette-affected areas.

To date, over 2,900 families remain displaced in six regions. Out of this displaced population, 1550 families are in evacuation centers while some 1400 families are staying with relatives or friends. Many of the shelters are temporary and people feel vulnerable living in them.

Recovery for these families is proving to be slow and uncertain. But there is good news.

In this issue's Special Feature, we tell the story of Kent and Melissa Canoy, husband-and-wife storekeepers in the village of Poblacion, in Surigao del Norte province. Kent had given up a seafarer's job 13 years ago so that he could be closer to his family. Together with his wife, Kent put up a sari-sari (convenience) store, which provided a decent livelihood for his family for the succeeding years.

Typhoon Odette destroyed Kent and Melissa's store and, just like that, a livelihood that had sustained them for 13 years was gone.

Kent was determined to rebuild his store, but did not know how. Help came, when Kent and Melissa were selected as one of the vendors for the World Food Programme (WFP)'s "value voucher" food assistance programme.

I invite you to read the story in the following pages. It is amazing how an innovative scheme has gone beyond providing immediate food assistance for affected families towards helping small business owners like Kent to recover from crippling losses.

We hope to bring you more stories like this in the coming months as we and our humanitarian partners continue to support typhoon survivors as they persevere towards recovery.

Gustavo Gonzalez



Recovery of MSMEs Affected by Typhoon Rai



Kent and Melissa Canoy in their sari-sari store. © WFP/Martin Winkler

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The Canoy's sari-sari store damaged by Typhoon Rai/Odette, December 2021 © WFP/Kent Canoy

Food assistance voucher system helps store owner save his business and his dream

*This is the tale of a dream and livelihood destroyed by super-Typhoon Rai. Then restored by the energy and enterprise of one couple, helped by an inspired food assistance scheme. The tale ends with gains for a resilient couple, their local economy, and their community.*

The story begins 13 years ago when Kent Canoy became unhappy with his life at sea, which kept him away from wife and four children. He thereafter abandoned his job on a cruise ship and the stable income that came with it.

With his wife Melissa, he undertook the risk and challenge of establishing a convenience store in his neighborhood, the barangay of Poblacion, in the municipality of San Francisco, in the Philippine province of Surigao Del Norte.

Typhoon Losses

Kent and Melissa had been operating their store successfully for 13 years when Typhoon Rai (local name: Odette) hit the Philippines. Kent was grateful and relieved to be at home to reassure his wife and children as the typhoon raged. But their business suffered tremendous losses. Their warehouse was washed out, rendering many goods unusable, and the wall of their shop was torn down.

The couple surveyed the damage and gave away any goods still usable to neighbors in need. They then began to think

about their future. Kent was determined not to relinquish his dream for himself and his family. He wanted to keep going, and to find a way to rebuild his shop and business. Then help came, when Kent and Melissa were selected as one of the vendors for the WFP's 'value voucher' food assistance programme.

Inspired Scheme

The 'value voucher' programme is an inspired way to deliver food assistance. WFP experts devised a list of food items tailored to deliver and encourage varied and nutritious diets. To obtain these food items, people must have a value voucher. The value voucher holders were selected from villages most affected by the typhoon, and from the most vulnerable households. WFP expects to provide 'value vouchers' to 19,000 households.

Selected vendors, including the Canoy's, must ensure that food items on the experts' list are available at shopping events in their specified barangays (villages or districts). Anyone with a value voucher can go to their nominated center in their barangay and make their purchases, using their value voucher. The choice of food they buy is theirs alone, up to a value of Php5600 (USD 107) per month, for two months.



Vendor Kent Canoy at work in the 'value voucher' centre installed in the sports facility of Mabini barangay, on a scheduled 'value voucher' shopping day © WFP/Martin Winkler

Profit Margins

When Kent and Melissa Canoy were selected as vendors for this scheme, the funding and credit lines they received enabled them to stock their warehouse with the wide range of commodities needed for the WFP shopping list. On scheduled shopping days, they bring the complete range of food commodities to designated centers in the barangays allotted to them.

Value voucher shopping events – or food bazaars – are held at barangay (community) level. This means that value voucher shoppers have access to nutritious and varied food without needing to travel to the nearest town. This saves them time and money. Credit must go to Catholic Relief Services (CRS), which organizes the value voucher scheme on behalf of WFP.



## Enhancing the Livelihood of Indigenous Farmers

At present, the Canoyos are the vendors for five barangays in Surigao Del Norte Province. Naturally, they enjoy a profit margin on the goods purchased by value voucher shoppers. They are guaranteed numerous shoppers, as well as payment for vouchers used. This helped them to strengthen and expand their business, including the repair and reconstruction of their shop and warehouse. They gladly acknowledge the key role of the value voucher scheme in the recovery of their business, which is now at 70 percent of its pre-Typhoon strength.

### Community Benefits

While the value voucher scheme benefits the Canoyos' business and community, it also strengthens the local markets. The Canoyos and other selected vendors buy their stocks from local suppliers, and from the Surigao City central market. When we met Kent at a value voucher shopping day in the barangay of Mabini, in Surigao City, he said: "The vegetables that I offer here today are from a small-scale farmer, and the fish is from another vendor. They are very happy that I obtain goods from them, which stimulates each of their businesses as well."

The value voucher scheme also boosts employment, as vendors need to employ additional staff to help with the many tasks involved in stocking their warehouses, delivering food to barangays on shopping days, and assisting shoppers with their purchases. The Canoyos alone employ 20 additional staff to carry out their activities as vendors.

The Canoyos take great joy in the benefits their role as value voucher vendors have brought to their wider family and community. It has also enabled Kent to keep his job and work locally. He can therefore stay with his family, support his wife, and watch his children grow up. He can also be there when they need him, exactly as he dreamt it.

WFP's innovative value-voucher food assistance is funded by the Government of Japan and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Read: **Overview of WFP's emergency response to support communities affected by Typhoon Rai**

-- Written by Martin Winkler and Dermot Peavoy



Members of the Subanen indigenous community in Titay performing a traditional dance © Project ConVerge



### A modern livelihood strengthening strategy for traditional farmers

In the municipality of Titay, Zamboanga Sibugay province, in the Zamboanga Peninsula region in Mindanao, lives a community of indigenous people called Subanen, or people of the river.

Traditionally lowland inhabitants, over the years the Subanen had been pushed into the interior by settlers and ended up living in the mountainous areas of Zamboanga del Sur and Misamis Occidental, Mindanao.

In Titay, the Subanen make their living from collecting and selling rubber lumps—a product left over from the process of tapping rubber trees for latex. Wilme Liasan comes from a long line of traditional rubber farmers; he has also inherited his forebears' difficult life.

"We earned very little, around Php23 (USD 0.44) per kilo [of rubber lumps]," says Wilme. "We would get paid late in the day, and sometimes later than that, on the next day. So how could we buy rice and food? It was a very hard time."

In 2017 the rubber farmers in Titay became part of an agrarian reform beneficiary organization (ARBO) called Malagandis Indigenous Farmers Association (MIFA) through Project ConVERGE.\*

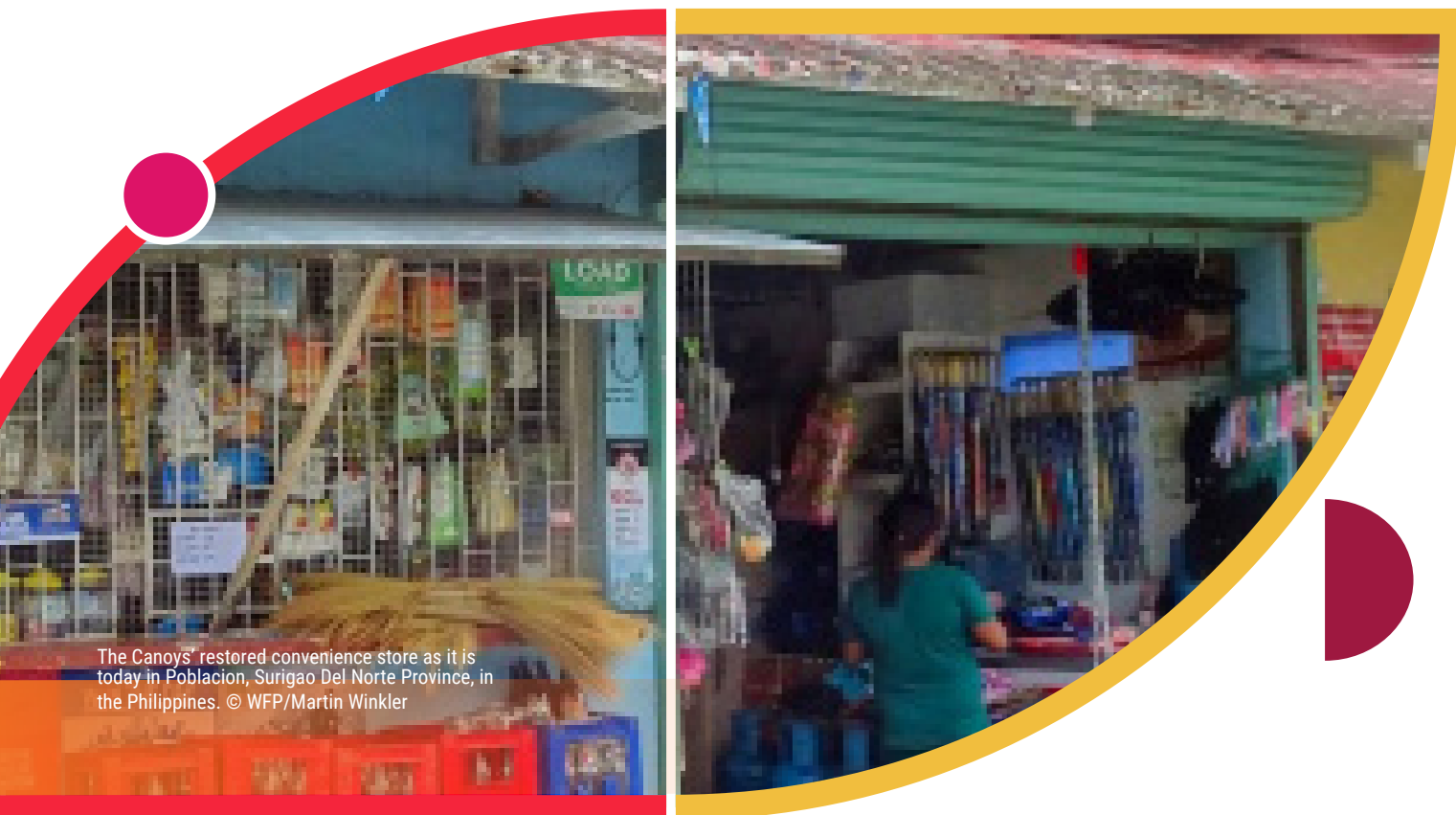
Project ConVERGE helped the members of MIFA to start selling their products as a group rather than

as individuals. Through consolidated marketing, MIFA's members are now able to sell their product at Php29 (USD 0.50) per kilo, or an increase of 26 per cent. Payment is also now done upfront.

"We are one of the first to be organized in this area," says Sabado Tunitay, MIFA's chairperson. "Neighboring municipalities do not have organizations of farmers. And so at first, people were skeptical. But when they saw the efficiency of MIFA, nearby farmers expressed interest in joining us and trading their rubber with the group."

*\*Project Convergence on Value Chain Enhancement for Rural Growth and Empowerment (Project ConVERGE) is a six-year project (2015-2021) implemented by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) funded by the Government of the Philippines and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The project supports the government's agenda to optimize, scale up and sustain the gains of the agrarian reform program through the provision of support services to beneficiaries awarded with lands and other smallholder farmers including women and indigenous peoples.*

Read: **People of the River: Subanen Tribe in Sibugay Upholding Culture and Modernity in Rubber Farming**



The Canoyos' restored convenience store as it is today in Poblacion, Surigao Del Norte Province, in the Philippines. © WFP/Martin Winkler



## Inclusion in Resilience Building

Dr. Maureen Ava-Mata, speaking at the consultation for the finalization of the Philippines' Resilient and Green Human Settlements Framework; beside her is UN-Habitat Country Programme Manager Christopher Rollo. © UN-Habitat Philippines



### Leaving no one behind in building green cities

Ten years ago, Dr. Maureen Ava-Mata survived bone cancer. The disease however left her with an orthopedic disability.

Today, Maureen is a champion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities in the Philippines. She represents the Alyansa ng may Kapansanang Pinoy (Alliance of Filipinos with Disabilities), a network composed of 451 organizations nationwide.

Maureen took her advocacy to a recent consultation led by the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) and the Climate Change Commission (CCC). She lobbied that the inclusion and accessibility for persons with disabilities should be incorporated in the government's Resilient and Green Human Settlements Framework (RGHSF),

which seeks to address the combined challenges of urbanization, climate change, and public health issues in human settlements.

Maureen said, "Persons with disabilities should have active and meaningful participation in building the resilience of communities by enabling them to participate in creating pathways towards green human settlements."

The consultation is another step forward as DHSUD and CCC inch closer to the finalization of the RGHSF. The framework is being developed with support from the Building Climate Resiliency through Urban Plans and Designs, a project led by UN-Habitat Philippines and funded by the German government's International Climate Initiative.

**Read: Inclusion, accessibility pushed as DHSUD advances resilience framework**

## Water, Decent Work and Peacebuilding



More than a thousand households and a school with 292 enrolled children in a Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) community in Barangay Nanga-an, Kabacan, North Cotabato gain access to safe and clean water. © ILO



equipment to ensure their occupational safety and health amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Food, water, shelter, and livelihoods are among the prerequisites to attaining personal security. By ensuring better access to these basic necessities, we empower the people to realize their own potential, and eventually, to contribute to the development of their own society. This is the principle of Human Security that Japan is strongly advocating for," says Ambassador Koshikawa Kazuhiko of the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines.

"The project has contributed to building peace, promoting decent work, and reducing poverty. Communities including former combatants, indigenous peoples, and vulnerable groups have gained access to decent work and livelihoods with better working conditions and social protection benefits. These are integral to sustainable development and a human-centred recovery from COVID-19," says Khalid Hassan, Director of the ILO Country Office for the Philippines.

After the long and hard struggle for resources, Josh can now see a door of opportunity opening for the community, which will change their lives for the better.

**Read: ILO and Japan launch five new water systems in Mindanao**

### Peace and its prerequisites

"Everyone deserves to meet their basic needs. It does not matter who they are nor where they come from," says 25-year old Josh Bedar from North Cotabato.

The barangay of Nangaan in Kabacan, a Bangsamoro Special Geographic Area in North Cotabato, used to be a waterless and conflict-affected community. Following the handover of water systems to the barangay on 9 March 2022, more than a thousand households, including a nearby school, now have access to safe and clean water.

A Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) community, community members, former combatants and indigenous peoples worked together to build a level II water system with 22 tap stands in Kabacan under the ILO Japan Water and Sanitation Project. As workers, they received skills training, and guaranteed minimum wage, social protection benefits. The project also provided personal protective



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Investing in rural people



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United Nations  
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Research Institute



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