



### Message from the Resident Coordinator

On 20 July 2022, we marked six months after Typhoon Odette (international name: Rai) left a trail of devastation in 11 of the country's 17 regions. At that point, the United Nations (UN) and humanitarian partners in the Philippines, and in support of the Government-led response, had provided life-saving assistance to over a million people. Following the announcement by the Government in April of the end of the response phase, the humanitarian community had since been supporting local governments to implement early recovery activities.

At the same time, over 3,000 people remained displaced in five regions (Regions VI, VII, VIII, MIMAROPA, and Caraga).

Our work was clearly far from finished and we prepared ourselves for the long road to recovery.

Seven days later, on 27 July 2022, a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck the mountainous province of Abra, triggering landslides and the collapse of structures.

According to the latest reports, a total of 48,477 people are currently displaced across the Cordillera and Ilocos Regions. Close to 25,000 houses and 177 health facilities have been either damaged or destroyed. Some 263 schools have sustained damage and 1.157 classrooms have been either destroyed or damaged.

The number of people in need is expected to continue rising in the coming days.

I would like to express my sympathy and solidarity with the families affected by the earthquake. At the same time, I commend the Government of the Philippines for their prompt reaction and the stewardship of responding to the needs of its constituents.

Humanitarian agencies are bilaterally supporting their government counterparts: the World Food Programme is providing 15 trucks to Office of Civil Defense (OCD) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to deliver various relief items to Abra. Members of the Shelter Cluster are deploying structural engineers to conduct a post-earthquake inspection of critical buildings and residential structures.



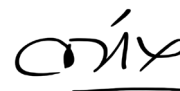
Villagers and rescue workers dig next to a chapel following a landslide caused by a 7.0-magnitude earthquake in the northern Philippines, in the village of Mayag in Bauko, Mountain Province. Photo © Police Regional Office Cordillera/AFP

The UN has arranged a satellite image assessment of the impact of the earthquake to support the work of the OCD. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is working with the UN Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) on the production of satellite images to help humanitarian responders in prioritizing areas severely affected by the shock.

We face urgent needs on simultaneous fronts. But we are undaunted.

With the Government serving as a beacon of hope, the Humanitarian Country Team and United Nations system in the Philippines remain ready to support the Government as reliable partners in this undertaking.

So we press on, looking always ahead, to our goal of leaving no one behind.



Gustavo Gonzalez

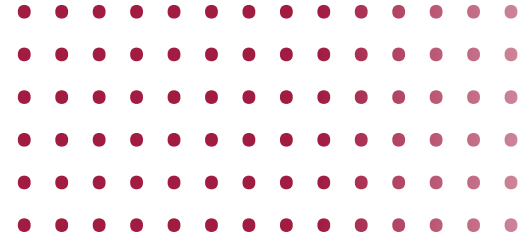


# Elimination of child labor



Photo © ILO Philippines

Eron (second from right) poses with his family in this picture taken in his grandmother's house. He is surrounded by his 70-year grandma, Euphemia Castro, older brother Ranel Almoguera, his sister, Rachele Almoguera, and 11-year old sibling, John Loyd Flores.



"I am going to finish Grade 10 in Malaya Integrated School. After that, I will see if Grade 11 and 12 is available. Since joining the Caring Gold mining project launched by the ILO, my life, as well as my family's, has become better. I have become even more motivated to help my family by studying hard so I can graduate one day. I have realized that it is better for me to focus on what I can do for myself and my family right now," said Eron.

The Caring Gold project also helped the Government of the Philippines to develop and roll out the SHIELD programme, a government-run effort that aims to withdraw children from the worst forms of child labor through holistic and immediate interventions at the community level.

When Eron's family became a beneficiary of the SHIELD programme, they started receiving 500 pesos (or about 9 US dollars) per month in financial assistance from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). This will last until Eron turns 18, as long as he does not return to mining and continues to attend school. The money is intended for school supplies, food, and transportation.

"My dream is to finish school and find a job that suits my knowledge and skills. I have no intention to go back to the mines. It's very difficult and dangerous, especially for a child. All I want to say to the world is that I am so blessed. Before going to bed, I never forget to say a little prayer for the guidance I have received," Eron shared.

Read more: [How Eron escaped the gold mine](#)



## How Eron escaped the gold mine

Malaya was not a glamorous place to live. But it glittered with gold.

Eron Flores and his family grew up in Malaya – a village located in a rural, landlocked area in the province of Camarines Norte in the Bicol Region – back when it was known for being a hotbed for illegal and artisanal small-scale gold mining. Malaya, which means "being free" in Filipino, was not a place where children were free to run, laugh, and play. Instead, many children were forced to work in gold mines, which is one of the most dangerous forms of child labor.

Eron was one of those children. At first, he just brought food for his parents. But, within a year, he had learned enough to start working on his own.

That's how Eron became a child laborer at the age of 14, just like his stepfather.

"I tried mining with the desire to help our family," Eron reasoned. "I chose to work because of our meager family income. I thought it would help to improve our life."

An estimated 2.1 million children work in child labor in the Philippines – including in gold mining. The country

is considered one of the most highly mineralized countries in the world, and its vast reserves of gold promise wages that are too good to pass up for many workers.

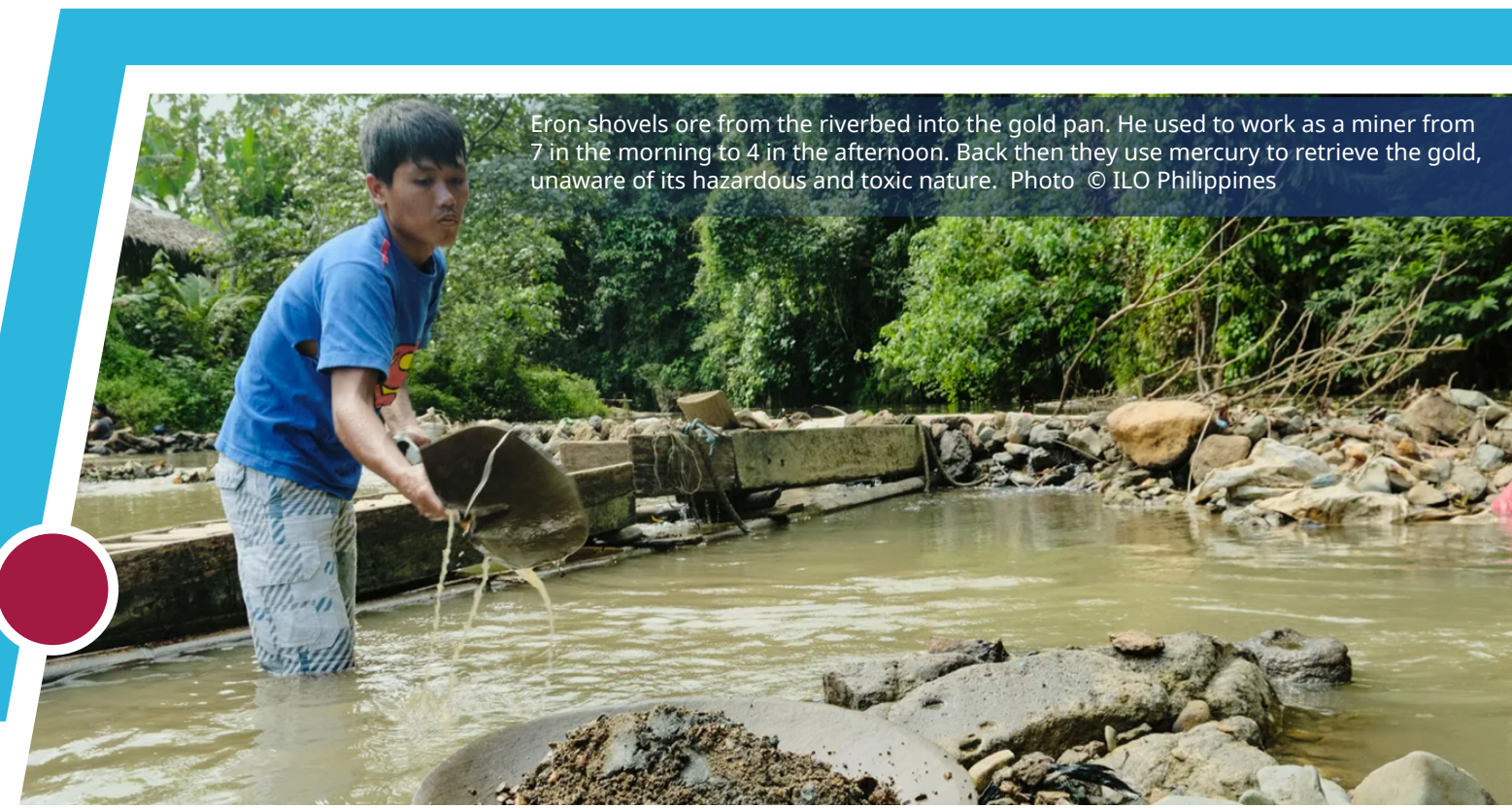
Poverty, long distances to the nearest schools, and a lack of knowledge around labor laws are some of the main obstacles to ending the cycle of child labor.

While the long term goal is to eradicate child labor, in the short term, local and global collaboration is making a difference for children like Eron.

Eron was pulled out of child labor thanks in part to the Caring Gold project, breaking the cycle of child labor in his family. Implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) with the support of the US Department of Labor, the Caring Gold project aimed to convene and coordinate a wide array of stakeholders.

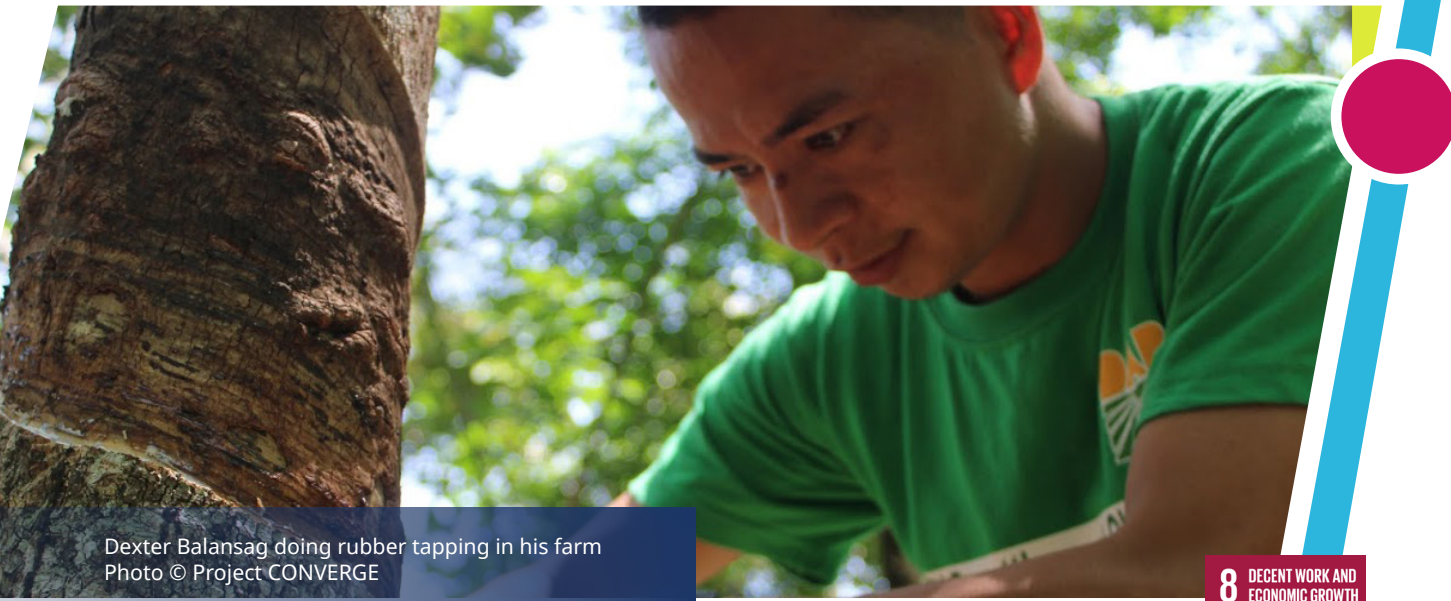
It also promoted decent work by facilitating collaboration and partnerships, which led to improved legislation and policies, access to social services, and more. It used a community-based approach to effect change.

One of the remarkable outcomes of this project is the setting up of the Malaya Integrated School through the united effort of the community, partners, and miners themselves.

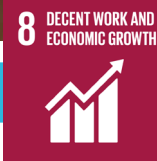


Eron shovels ore from the riverbed into the gold pan. He used to work as a miner from 7 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon. Back then they use mercury to retrieve the gold, unaware of its hazardous and toxic nature. Photo © ILO Philippines





Dexter Balansag doing rubber tapping in his farm  
Photo © Project CONVERGE



### Preventing the exodus of young farmers

Dexter Balansag, 30, is a rubber farmer in the village of Tubod in the municipality of Tampilisan, Zamboanga del Norte.

Dexter has been tapping rubber trees for a living since he was 11 years old. As he got older, he observed many young people leaving their village to take up jobs in the city. Farming had become an unpopular choice to earn a living. With no new farmers to join the ranks of aging ones, the average age of farmers is now 54 years.

Various agricultural and rural development programs have sought to revive young people's interest in agriculture as a source of livelihood. Among them is Project Convergence on Value Chain Enhancement for Rural Growth and Empowerment (Project ConVERGE). Project ConVERGE is an agribusiness development project that aims to help rural farmers by increasing their capacities to earn and provide better living to their respective families. The project is jointly funded by the Philippine Government and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) with the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) as the lead implementing agency.

Project ConVERGE worked with a farmers cooperative in the municipality of Tampilisan, where Dexter lives. As a member of the ARBO in Tampilisan, called Cabong Tampilisan Multi-Purpose Cooperative (CATAMCO), Dexter was hired by the Project as an enumerator and received training in farming techniques.

Dexter applied his training to enhance his rubber farming. As a result, Dexter is able to produce 200 kilos of rubber cup lumps monthly, which is consolidated and sold by their coop. He earns 2,000 pesos a month, or about 36 US Dollars. He has also planted new rubber trees that would be ready for harvest in the coming years.

Dexter perseveres in rubber farming because it has always been a trusted source of income for him and his family. He wishes that other young farmers would come to share his appreciation for farming.

Read more: [A Youth's Insight on Agriculture](#)



### Women youth carpenters build homes for typhoon-affected families

Cyrazhel, Danielle and Jamera are second year students of a three-year diploma course in Construction Engineering Technology at the Surigao Education Center (SEC) in Surigao City, Surigao del Norte Province. Surigao City was heavily affected by Typhoon Rai (local name: Odette), which damaged 1.7 million houses and destroyed 415,000 others across six regions in the Philippines.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), together with UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP and Action Against Hunger, and in partnership with the City Government of Surigao and TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority), worked to assist 123 families most affected by Typhoon Odette in Surigao City. Most of these families are expected to be in prolonged displacement as their former homes are located in places designated as "No-Build Zones."

While their families were also affected by Typhoon Odette, Cyrazhel, Danielle and Jamera, along with their classmates, volunteered with TESDA, as part of their internship, to build

transitional shelters in the village of Cagniog in Surigao City.

For 10 days, the young women helped build homes for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Danielle says, "Building a house wasn't an easy task, but when I saw the result – the IDPs having their homes – I felt overwhelming joy."

This cross-agency initiative provided the families with longer term solutions to shelter and multi-sectoral assistance to meet their basic needs, which would not have been possible without the funding support of the Government of Australia, Japan, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (UN CERF) and USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.



Cyrazhel, Danielle and Jamera volunteered to build homes for internally displaced persons in Surigao City. Photo © IOM Philippines





Office of the Resident Coordinator



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Investing in rural people



International Labour Organization



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