



UNited

to Leave No One Behind

A monthly newsletter of the UN Philippines

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Message from the Resident Coordinator

On 15 November 2021, about a hundred public schools in the Philippines reopened for face-to-face classes. The UN Country Team rejoiced as we had been advocating for this for a long time since schools in the country were shuttered as a result of the pandemic. We were concerned that Filipino children were being left behind by millions of children all over the world who had been able to return to school sooner.

Prolonged school closures have a significant impact on children's physical and mental health. Without the safety net that school often provides, children are more vulnerable to abuse, gender-based violence including sexual exploitation and child marriage, and child labour that they may experience at home, especially in the stressful context of the pandemic. The most vulnerable children, and those who are unable to access remote learning, are disproportionately impacted and are at risk of never returning to the classroom.

I commend the Department of Education (DepEd)'s leadership that enabled the start of in-person classes and its coordination with relevant agencies, including the Department of Health

(DOH). And I thank all my colleagues for their unflagging efforts to make this possible--a shining example of their commitment to Leave No One Behind.

This month, we bring you more stories of how our partners are taking charge and taking action to improve their lives and their communities: Jade, a member of Women Waste Warriors in Paco, Manila, who recycle PET bottles into urban garden pots; Gladys, who participates in a community-based COVID-19 surveillance and tracking system; medical volunteers like Dr. Javier who make sure that the homeless get their COVID-19 vaccine; Dionalan, who leads his fellow women and men farmers to find other ways to make a living amid the pandemic; John, who goes around persuading fellow fisherfolk to stop using dynamite for fishing; Teresita, who travels to join a workshop so that she can prepare her family for the next big storm; Tawi-Tawi police officer Jaiton, who tells law enforcers about the importance of mental health; and Norjana, displaced by the Marawi siege, who vows that she will rebuild her life in her new home.

We will continue to bring you these remarkable stories as we UNite to leave no one behind.

Gustavo Gonzalez



Photo: Children in the Municipality of Malilipot in Albay Province play and receive psychosocial support and other social welfare services in Child-Friendly Spaces set up by the UNICEF following the impact of Typhoon Goni.

Credit: OCHA/Martin San Diego



Anticipatory Action

"Typhoons will come, but we will be ready"

Teresita Tendenilla smiles shyly at the camera. She is 79 years old and has just been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, so she decided to attend the community meeting in her village—Barangay Bato in Catanduanes Province, where FAO, WFP, IOM, UNICEF, UNFPA and local partners, in coordination with OCHA and local government are implementing an anticipatory action pilot funded by the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). The project is targeting 44 most-at-risk municipalities in Bicol and Visayas and will deliver humanitarian assistance to those at risk to be affected by the Category 4 or 5 typhoon ahead of its landfall.

Despite her age, Teresita continues to work to support her family. Her son who works as a fisherman and also in the abaca industry, was doubly affected by Super Typhoon Goni (local name Rolly) last November 2020, losing his livelihoods as well as the roof of his house. Today, a year later, Teresita and her son hope not to suffer the same situation again. She also wants to know how to respond to her grandson's fears should they have to leave their home again to go to a shelter, as well as how to support the women in her community who, as she highlights, are the most affected.

Through pre-identified selection criteria, 270,500 beneficiaries are targeted under the anticipatory action pilot to be reached and will receive three days before the landfall multi-purpose cash assistance, protection commodities, nutrition supplies, WASH and shelter kits among others, to mitigate the impact of a typhoon on their homes and livelihoods.

Teresita bids us farewell and, before leaving, lets us know that although she has always come through when she was affected by



Photo: Teresita Tendenilla attends an Anticipatory Action meeting in Barangay Bato, Catanduanes Province Credit: OCHA

a typhoon, she now knows the true meaning of resilience. She will now have the resources and skills that will help her to be prepared for typhoons in her area, even though the intensity of these cyclones is only increasing due to climate change.



Circular Economy



Photo: Members of the Brgy. 412 Women Waste Warriors hard at work in making recycled plastic pot Credit: Brgy. 412, Manila City

Turning plastic to profit

The typical day of Jade Sarah Joven Suren, 35, is busy. Together with other women of Barangay 412 in Paco, Manila, mostly housewives and mothers, she spends most of her day at the barangay (village) daycare center making urban gardening pots out of PET bottles.

The recycled plastic pots or "super paso" are picked up weekly to supply the government's urban gardening program. Weekly orders can go as high as 5,000 pots, giving the women like Suren a weekly take home money of around P300 (USD 6), and on a really good week, as much as P1,000 (USD 20).

"Before, I used to just lay around the house and do house chores. Now, I am productive, I am able to earn a little even if I don't have a job," says the mother of one, who tries to

augment her husband's income as a cable TV agent and barangay secretary. "More than that, I learn new skills and get to enhance my knowledge. I also get to bond with other women in the community."

'Before' refers to Jade's life before becoming a member of Brgy. 412 Women Waste Warriors. 3Ws, the group's nickname, is a community-based organization (CBO) whose mission is to promote proper waste management within their homes and community, and to explore alternative reduce, reuse, recycle (3Rs)-related livelihood projects. 3Ws was organized in early 2021 and was duly registered by the Department of Labor and Employment in June with the support of Healthy Oceans and Clean Cities Initiative, a project implemented by UN-Habitat.

Read more: **From plastic to profit: Communities explore opportunities in recycling plastic waste**



Community Support To Covid-19 Response



Filipino nurse Carmela Pangwe (center) conducts an orientation on COVID-19 prevention and home care management organized by Families Choice for Health and Development at a mining community in Ucab village, Itogon municipality, Benguet province in the northern Philippines.
Credit: WHO/Rolox de la Pena



Community supports COVID-19 surveillance and contact-tracing

“This health tracker has been very helpful for us to monitor our family members, especially our children,” says Gladys Gapongli, a homemaker and wife of a small-scale miner in Itogon, Benguet in northern Philippines. “Now we can know and record if they are ill during this pandemic.”

Gladys’ household is one of 400 beneficiaries of the Home as Active Advocate and Network to COVID-19 Prevention and Control (“HAAN COVID”) project, implemented by Families Choice for Health and Development under WHO’s Civil Society Organization (CSO) Initiative in the Philippines.

In the Ilocano language, *haan* means no, creating a strong message of ‘No COVID’ in the gold mining communities of Benguet where the organization operates.

The HAAN COVID project is a community-level response to the surge of COVID-19 cases in the mining areas in Benguet in October 2020.

In early 2021, Families Choice pioneered an innovative health reporting and community surveillance system to address contact tracing data gaps among vulnerable groups. Using the COVID-19 handbook developed by WHO Philippines, the organization created hard copy logbooks (“Home Health Trackers”) for miners and their families to record their daily health status and activities.

Read more: [Community innovation to support surveillance and contact tracing](#)

Community Vaccinations



A resident of Metro Manila receives his COVID-19 vaccine at the University of the Philippines in Quezon City
Credit: WHO/Kace Cabali



Vaccinating the homeless

On a humid Manila day, a shoeless man in black shorts, black t-shirt, and blue football club cap eased himself down, out of an iconic Philippine jeepney and into a wheelchair. This was a good day. Today, he received a dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

Robert is one of nearly 3 million homeless people in the National Capital Region (NCR), to which the City of Manila belongs. With money earned by begging, he pays for food, and anything left over goes into medicines. Diabetes has cost him some of his toes and fingers.

Despite his health needs, he is not comfortable dealing with officials or health workers.

“I haven’t asked for help from the barangay (village) clinic because I get embarrassed when I go there. When people see me, they are disgusted by my appearance. It is hurtful when I see people being disgusted by how I look, or just because I

roam the streets, am homeless and don’t have an address,” Robert said.

Today, he is at the gymnasium of the University of the Philippines (UP) in Diliman, Quezon City which has been turned into a vaccination centre to reach those who might miss out on life-saving vaccines because of stigma, a lack of money or residential address, access to vaccination registration, or other barriers.

“This vaccination drive is a huge relief for us, especially since the vaccines are free. We hope that everyone gets vaccinated. It’s a relief knowing that eventually, everyone will be vaccinated,” said Robert.

Medical volunteer Dr Patrick Javier said, “There’s a certain stigma to being homeless and we try to make sure people feel as welcome as possible and that their situation is not a hindrance to getting vaccinated. Like anybody else, they deserve to be vaccinated.”

Read more: [Community vaccinations help overcome stigma and practical barriers](#)

Farmer leader rallies members to find new livelihood amid COVID-19

Dionalan Diongol leads a 78-member farmers' group in Kilugay, a barrio in the village of Carigongan, Lanao Del Sur, Mindanao. Dionalan and his fellow farmers had suffered income losses because of the constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and towards the end of the year 2020 they had almost lost hope of anyone helping them.

On 28 January 2021, Dionalan's group—United Kilugay Farmers Irrigators Association Incorporated— began work on rehabilitating a communal irrigation system project in their barrio. The project was implemented by the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) - Region 10 and funded by the Philippine Government and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) under its INREMP (**I**ntegrated **N**atural **R**esources and **E**nvironmental **M**anagement **P**rogramme) project.

Dionalan mobilized their association to complete the project. With the project covering the cost of labor, it became the farmers' only hope and source of income to provide for their family's needs. The men, 18- to 50-years-old, provided the labor, while the women helped to clean the construction site and brought food for the workers. At the start of the rainy season, the farmers started work at six o'clock in the morning and ended at two o'clock in the afternoon before the rains came. Dionalan brought a makeshift tent to the site so that the farmers could continue working while it rained.

On 30 June 2021, or six months later, work on the Kilugay communal irrigation system was completed. That was a proud moment for Dionalan and the farmers. Aside from providing them with a livelihood, the IFAD project helped them to build a water irrigation canal that can supply water for their farmland.

Read more: **Meet Dionalan: The empowered irrigators' association president**



Photo: Dionalan Diongol, president of United Kilugay Farmers Irrigators Association Incorporated. Credit: National Irrigation Administration Region 10



Photo: John, a fisherfolk and local community leader in Lipayran, Bantayan Island. Credit: IOM Philippine



Fisherfolk take the frontlines of ocean protection

"Kung gusto gyud kita nga ang dagat maga pabilin ug makahatag sa iyang bunga sa paga abundansya, panggaon nato ni siya," ("If we want the sea to be as abundant as it has always been, we must take care of it") says John, a fisherfolk and local community leader in Lipayran, Bantayan Island, Cebu Province, in the Visayas. Previously engaged in dynamite fishing for 10 years, he admits that he used to just focus on the "now"—catching enough fish for the day—and did not think about the effect of his actions for generations to come. "I contributed to damaging the reef, the marine life here, but I am making amends for the things that I have done."

Although not originally from Bantayan, John has lived on the island for 32 years. In 2007, he participated in a community workshop on environmental and marine life preservation which became a turning point for him. "I was enlightened. I decided to stop dynamite fishing and shifted to the natural way of fishing," he says.

He started to encourage others to join the campaign against illegal fishing and was initially met with resistance and threats from other fisherfolk. "It's difficult to change people's behavior. For every 100 people I talk to, I can only convince a handful of them and only two or three remain committed to the cause," he shares. "Fisherfolk who did not agree with my advocacy would threaten to throw dynamites over the roof of my house. It was scary."

IOM, through its Climate Change Adaptation and Community Resilience in the Philippines (CARP) project, supported by the IOM Development Fund, works with vulnerable communities such as Bantayan which are facing the worsening effects of the climate crisis. Other than illegal fishing practices destructing marine biodiversity, the small coastal community is also more susceptible to sea level rise.

CARP aims to engage vulnerable communities in climate resilience discussions and explore the current state of migration in the context of the climate emergency in the Philippines, impacting four main sectors including: farmers and fisherfolk, women, elder persons and the urban poor.

While John's advocacy of preserving marine life can be difficult, he hopes that one day, his decision of turning away from illegal fishing activities and encouraging other fisherfolk to do the same, will all be worth it.

Mental Health And Psychosocial Support



Photo: D. Jaiton Jaafar, a police officer from the Tawi-Tawi Provincial Police Office Credit: IOM Philippines



Looking after the mental health of law enforcers

"Hindi ka magiging effective kung mismo sa sarili mo may kulang," ("You will not be effective in helping others if you yourself need help"), says Jaiton Jaafar, a police officer from the Tawi-Tawi Provincial Police Office.

In her line of duty, Jaiton experiences more than public safety concerns. She faces stress and challenges when it comes to insecurity, violence and discrimination, especially in representing her tribe and minorities. It is important that in difficult and stressful situations, police officers like Jaiton take time to care for and protect their mental health.

On 28 September to 1 October 2021, IOM, with support from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Manila, conducted a four-day training on Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for local service providers in Tawi-Tawi.

Through the training, the participants cultivated a deeper understanding of mental health and were provided with psychosocial assistance themselves, building their capacity to deliver effective MHPSS

response to those vulnerable to recruitment in communities in the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

The project seeks to promote regional stability through youth, women and community empowerment and aims to reduce the influence of violent extremist groups by enhancing the capacity of these communities to work jointly towards prosperity and peace.

Jaiton is grateful for having been given the opportunity to not only expand her knowledge on PFA and MHPSS, but also reflect on her well-being.



"This is where we will rebuild our lives, together."

For Norjannah Amerol, 46, the permanent house and lot she was awarded on 15 October 2021 is an opportunity to rebuild part of what was lost - not only their houses but their community as well, in the five-month Marawi Siege four years ago.

She recalls how she feared for the lives of her two sons who chose to stay behind to take care of the family's belongings during the siege, thinking that the gunfight would last for only two to three days. They eventually made their way to safety by crossing the Lanao Lake by boat, but not without one of them being hit by a bullet in the leg.

Now her family can start anew in a home they call their own. "This house is a blessing, a symbol that if a person patiently waits, Allah will provide His blessings. Four years! Whatever hardships my family went through, those have been assuaged by this house – I will not let my children be separated from me again – that kind of fear as a mother is something that I do not want to experience again," she remarks in the vernacular.

Amerol is among the 250 families displaced by the 2017 Marawi Siege who were awarded permanent house and lot from the National Housing Authority (NHA) and the Rebuilding Marawi Project of the UN-Habitat.

Read more: **250 internally displaced families in Marawi rebuild lives as they receive permanent house and lot**



Shelter



Office of the Resident Coordinator



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



LIFAD

Investing in rural people



International Labour Organization



IOM
UN MIGRATION



International Trade Centre



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



UNAIDS



UN environment programme

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

unicef
for every child



unicri
United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute



UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION



OCHA
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs



UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



UNOPS



UN WOMEN
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



World Food Programme



World Health Organization
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