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Philippines, Climate Volatility

To What Extent Can Typhoons Affect Food Insecurity in the Philippines and How Can This Be Addressed?

Philippines

The Philippines is an archipelagic country with approximately 7,000 thousand islands grouped into three main lands; Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. It is a republic country led by its current president, Rodrigo Duterte and the three government branches; executive, judicial, and legislative (Gov.ph, 2021). With the COVID-19 pandemic, President Duterte implemented a strict lockdown curfew in order to assess the spread of the virus. Major consequences include the lack of mobility that limits economic availability in order to provide basic necessities for families. This can be comparable in the state of South Africa's lockdown, in which many of its population struggled to provide food because people were not able to have a stable income since a majority lived on a day-to-day basis (Staunton, Swanepoel, and Labuschaigne, 2020). In application, many Filipino families have chosen to breach regulations and venture out past the curfew in search of food. 64 year-old Bernadette Sablazar who works as a freelance massage therapist, one of the many who defy the curfew, states that "There is no cure for starvation. We'll be dead!" (CNA Insider, 2020). This signifies the extent to which people would go in order to get a scrape of food. Those who are situated in urban slums that are congested and informal are vulnerable to food insecurity due to unstable income and government restrictions such as the lockdowns, making it difficult to access food. Lack of sanitation and infrastructure, limiting the utilization of food and the consequences of natural disasters that can heighten these issues to a greater extent. For such reasons that the Philippines is located in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific Ocean, which is one of the countries that resides along the Ring of Fire, a term that is used to describe "a belt of active volcanoes and earthquake epicenters bordering the Pacific Ocean" (The World Factbook, 2021). Therefore, people endure numerous typhoons and tropical storms and with the vulnerability, it endangers the food production of major crops such as rice, banana, and sugarcane and livelihood of the population. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), is a tool that classifies areas of the world in relation to the status of food security in the population. In 2015 the IPC was implemented in the Philippines. In which, results show that in 2020, 64% of the population, or 54.9 million Filipinos, are chronically food insecure (IPC-Chronic level 2 and above) with 21.6 million people facing higher levels of chronic food insecurity (IPC-Chronic level 3 and 4) (IPC, 2020). Areas that have high levels of food insecurity are also the same areas that are vulnerable to natural disasters. Overall, much like Sablazar, most Filipino households depend on informal jobs such as food vendors and Jeepney drivers whose income is not fixed and depends primarily on a day to day basis (CNA Insider, 2020). This makes it difficult for people to rise up from their circumstances when people work just to survive and bring food to the table, making it impossible to dream of a better life. Especially, if all odds are piled up and against them. Take for example, "in November of 2020, the Philippines was hit by Typhoon Vamco, the 21st storm to hit in 2020. 845,000 people are in need of humanitarian help" (Remmits & Birkman, 2020). Not only was the Philippines dealing with the COVID-19 virus that can cause detrimental health issues, the people also had to face the heavy rain and floods that the Typhoon Vamco caused. Two difficult challenges that had to be endured at the same time, which heightens the economic instability and access to food. Assessing the need to keep a safe distance from each other in order to decrease the spread of the virus and to locate another area due to the floods can be a hard task for the people and the government.

Typhoons

Due to the location that the Philippines reside, it's susceptibility to natural disasters affect the state of the country in various perspectives of the economy, social, and the environment. Typhoons that include flooding rain and drought have brought numerous deaths, prevalent hunger, widespread disease and property loss across the Philippines (Warren, 2016). Not only does the Philippines encounter typhoons, but also landslides, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes (Puckett, 2017). Nevertheless, the Philippines

primarily encounter typhoons the most and have the most damage with an average of "nineteen" tropical storms occurring "before moving directly towards the Philippines (Warren, 2016). The Philippines being prone to natural disasters endangers the population's safety and livelihood. Take for example, a 200 MPH Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda), one of the strongest storms to occur, affected "nine out of the 17 regions" in the Philippines, leaving "6,000 fatalities, 28,000 injured, and over four million displaced" in 2013 (Puckett, 2017). The large number of people that are being displaced causes a domino effect towards other sectors since they will need to reside elsewhere due to the destruction of their homes and must rely on government aid for basic needs while the restoration is being assessed. Taking into account that with the amount of deaths and fatalities, Typhoon Haiyan has also destroyed important infrastructures and impacted the stability of vital buildings such as hospitals. Furthermore, most typhoons usually occur in the densely populated islands Luzon and Visayas (Warren, 2016). This aspect is detrimental since it reflects the areas in the Philippines that have high levels of food insecurity. Lanao del Sur, Northern Samar, Occidental Mindoro and Sulu, part of the Visayas area, are identified as Chronic Level 4 by the The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), defined as an area with severe chronic food insecurity due to poor food consumption and high level of undernutrition (IPC, 2020). If such areas experience a typhoon, the people would suffer tremendously as the natural disaster will accentuate their difficulty in attaining nutritional food since it will affect their stability and the environment. Around "40%" of the Philippines population earns a living through farming (Warren , 2016) and with heavy rain and floods affecting the environment, it will eventually cause food shortage and instability in the economy. Take for instance that in areas of the Philippines that are identified to experience food insecurity, there is a lack of availability in rice, pork, and fish (IPC, 2020). With the increase of demand and decrease of supply due to the affected environment from typhoons, the cost of such food products will increase; causing poor households who have low income to not be able to afford basic nutrition. The continuous migration of people from rural to urban cities, pursuing economic advancement, has caused an increase in population growth in areas that are vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters (Remmits & Birkman, 2020). With "38%" of urban residents living in the slums with inadequate living conditions, such as lack of sanitation and sufficient infrastructure, extreme weather can greatly cause numerous deaths, destruction, and increase food and social insecurity (Remmits & Birkman, 2020). Overall, with natural calamities that poor areas experience, it will increase the instability that such areas already undergo.

Community-based and Culturally-sensitive Approaches

The complex trait of food insecurity, which is often toppled by a pandemic, typhoon, or poverty, not only called for urgency but for sustainable solutions. Since the Philippines is extremely vulnerable to natural calamities and other social issues are very inflexible, there is a strong presence of both local and international nonprofit organizations in the country, such as the National. Take for instance, the Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), that serves as a legal operational basis to address regional issues, such as disaster management, in which they created a TaskForce, the AHA Centre (Remmits & Birkman, 2020). For local nonprofit organizations, many informal and formal associations have pursued in aiding the population in an individual and extra-familial welfare (Bankoff, 2003). When international assistance comes to intervene, oftentimes it does not take into account the societal aspects of the Philippines that are vital in addressing issues, such as natural calamities. A prominent issue is that it does not effectively communicate with the community, creating confusion and essentially greater damage. When different international assistance comes to aid, most of them take a different approach to assessing the issue with local governments due to the lack of formal partnership; thus the local authorities face a

challenge in regards to which organizations they should follow (Trajano, 2016). Nevertheless, these organizations, given their capacity and approach, can mobilize and empower communities. However, there is a key difference in which such an approach aims to centralize not only the needs of the community but their voices and perspectives in such a process. Community-based and cultural-sensitive approaches allow the specific community to be part of the process of assessing the problems and creating the solutions to implement. With implementing community-based solutions, such as integrating community risk reduction into the local development process will essentially build a sustainable and equitable community (Victoria, 2003). In the process of incorporating the community as stakeholders in creating the interventions, it allows for authentic assessments and implementation rather than merely assuming the issues and needs. In application, a Community-based disaster management (CBDM) is not new to the Philippines, after years of implementation, it has shown effectiveness in reducing the loss and frequency of disasters (Victoria, 2003). CBDM principles include the communities participation, priority in the vulnerable people, making sure it is community specific-based, strengthening existing coping strategies and capacities, ensuring that is part of the development process, and to have international aid as a supporting role (Victoria, 2003). In its entirety, a community-based approach fused with cultural-sensitivity wherein interventionists are not only aware of the critical differences in values, norms, and culture of the community setting but also accept and navigate these differences with respect and humility. The people who are in need will have a voice and a representation for the fusion of these approaches is perhaps fueled by trust and collaboration while driven by compassion, inclusivity, and patience. Assessing the issues from bottom-up perspective, to work on the ground aspect rather than viewing it from the top. The enforcement of these combined approaches with enough resources and collaboration coming from all sectors (i.e. local government units, NGOs, national government) can definitely provide effective, sustainable solutions that can impact the interdependent structures and systems from the bottom up.

The community-based and cultural-sensitive approaches require extreme coordination and partnership. It is driven by trust, collaboration, and inclusivity as such directly works with the community. As a whole, community-based is a research method that can be implemented within the works of the people, becoming a function that disables hierarchy of some sort. In addition, there is also greater significance in partnering with other organizations and local government units. This way, resources can be maximized and strengthen collaboration that can lead to greater impact. Meanwhile, culturally-sensitivity is a mindset approach that allows the people who are part of the community-based to be accountable for their actions and perceptions towards the people they are involved with. These two approaches being implemented in one solution is crucial because more than the outcome and the result, one of its main objectives is to promote sustainability and long-term positive impact.

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