

# **Rebuilding Communities and Lives: The Role of *Damayan* and *Bayanihan* in Disaster Resiliency**

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## **Abstract**

*The study focuses on the social impact of extreme events like typhoons, particularly on the cohesiveness of rural communities in the Philippines. It highlights how damayan (culture of compassion), and bayanihan (cooperation) are used as resources by community members in coping with extreme events and can be mechanisms towards rebuilding lives and communities damaged by typhoons.*

*The study seeks to describe how the communal coping mechanisms alleviate the negative effects of typhoons. It highlights the role of the culture of damayan (compassion) and bayanihan (cooperation) among community members, as existing indigenous coping mechanisms which not only help rebuild the physical community but also uplift the emotional well-being of community members. The study provides insights on how mainstreaming damayan and bayanihan in disaster interventions can improve aid delivery and build more resilient communities.*

## **I. Introduction**

The Philippines is a natural hazard prone country, experiencing several types of natural disaster each year. Of these, the most recent are Typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng that almost drowned Marikina City and other nearby cities. Because of the devastating effects of these two succeeding typhoons as well as the ongoing debates about climate change, efforts at disaster risk management, once again become popular among local government units, the civil society, private organizations, and international humanitarian organizations that are clamoring for the needs to develop resilient communities in response to natural disasters that could be further triggered by climate change.

Natural disasters have been part of the country's everyday life situations. Because of its location and landscape, the Philippines is considered one of the world's natural hazard-prone countries. Lying along the pathway of tropical cyclones from the Pacific Ocean, an average of 20 tropical cyclones crosses the country's area of responsibility annually. Cyclones are most common from July to December and their damaging elements include high winds, storm surges and floods (World Bank and National Disaster Coordinating Council, 2003). The country is also earthquake prone because of its location in an active earthquake region along the Circum-Pacific Seismic Belt, a geological fault line. As such, a minimum of five earthquakes occur daily, though most of these are imperceptible. The strongest earthquake was felt in 1990 (EMB-DENR and UNDP, 1996);

Aside from cyclones and earthquakes, the country is also prone to tsunamis and volcanic hazards because of its location along the Pacific Ring of Fire. It has 220

volcanoes, of which 22 are active. Of these, five erupted in the last 25 years. In addition, tsunamis are frequent in the southwest of Mindanao (CBDRM Training and Learning Circle-Philippines, 2009). Other natural hazards include flash floods in mountainous areas and droughts brought about by the El-Nino-Southern Oscillation where the most pronounced occurred in 1982, between October 1989 to March 1990 and between October 1993 to May 1994 (World Bank and National Disaster Coordinating Council, 2003).

Against this backdrop of recurring natural hazards, poverty lurks in many parts of the country which aggravated the vulnerability of majority of its population. When disaster strikes, it disproportionately affects poorer families. Poverty makes poor people most vulnerable: families whose livelihoods lack social protection like farming, fishing and informal work are at risk of hunger. In addition, the limited access to clean water and sanitation, poor diet and limited access to health service provision undermine poor families' resistance to diseases and malnutrition. However, people in poorer communities, having limited resources and outside support have learned to rely on themselves in their every day survival by utilizing indigenous support mechanisms like *bayanihan* (cooperation) and *damayan* (roughly translated as compassion).. In times of extreme events, they also utilized these indigenous mechanisms as social support in order to survive the disasters and in strengthening their resilience to rebuild their lives and their communities.

## **II. The Research Problem**

What roles do *damayan* (compassion) and *bayanihan* (cooperation) play in the lives of people in poor rural communities in buffering the social impacts of typhoons and accompanying floods particularly in coping with emotional trauma and in rebuilding their physical communities?

## **III. The Research Area/Context**

The research was conducted in the province of Albay in the Philippines. Albay is composed of 18 municipalities and 655 barangays. The province has a yearly average of 20 typhoons ranging from 60-180kph. Average rainfall is 233 millimetres with lowest at 130 millimetres (in April) and highest at 389 millimetres (in December). The eastern areas of the province experience no dry season, western areas have heavily distributed rainfall and central areas have no pronounced maximum rain period with a dry period from November to January. In 2007, two super typhoons passed through Bicol: Typhoons Lando (Hagibis) and Mina (Mitag) affected 69,465 families and caused flashfloods and landslides.

## **III. Research Methodology and Profile of Respondents**

This study is part of the MICRODIS Integrated Project undertaken by the Citizen's Disaster Response Center (CDRC) and Xavier University (XU) covering the province of Albay. It utilizes both the survey method and focus group discussions to

generate needed data for the analysis. To facilitate smooth entry of researcher to survey sites courtesy calls were conducted. Pre-survey site visits from September 16-18, 2008 were also done to gather preliminary data. CDRC and its regional center, Tarabang para sa Bicol (TABI), made final technical arrangements in the survey area from November 29-30, 2008. Actual fieldwork in Albay spanned from December 1-22, 2008 with enumerators from XU. Four focus group discussions were held during June 3-5, 2010 to explore the social aspect of community coping mechanisms for disasters.

### Survey

The areas to be surveyed were chosen through multi-stage cluster sampling. The first stage involved selecting two municipalities based on probability proportional to the size of barangays resulting to the selection of Legaspi City and Polangui. The second stage developed a frame of affected and least affected barangays. This categorization was based on the assessment of the National Disaster Coordination Council (NDCC) and the Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Two affected and two least affected barangays per municipality were chosen: Bonga and Matanag (most affected), and Cabaganan and San Francisco (least affected) for Legaspi city; Kinale and Balangibang (most affected) and Maysua and Napo (least affected) for Polangui.

Fifty (50) sample households per barangay were systematically chosen. The total number of households in a barangay was divided with the desired sample size to determine the sample interval. The surveyors then selected a random number between one to five. From a reference dwelling area, the surveyors started from the northeast portion of the area and found the n<sup>th</sup> house as the random start and used the sample interval to select the next sample household.

### FGD

Participants of the four focus group discussions were purposively chosen and identified from the survey. Selection criteria included: a) those who are greatly affected; b) those who are residents before and after the disaster; and c) those who are willing to participate and discuss. The focus group discussions were done in Balangibang, Kinale, Matanag and San Francisco with a total of 42 participants.

### **III. Limitations of the Study**

The study focuses on disaster management practices in Asian countries, particularly in the Philippines; hence the study became descriptive in nature. Since the concept of *damayan* is a form of social support the statistical test used focused on the correlation of anxiety and depression indicators with the received support from friends and local group affiliations to see if the practice affects anxiety and depression levels. Because gathered data states that no formal community organizing occurred, the effects

of *bayanihan* and how it helped the community was culled from qualitative data from the focus group discussions.

#### **IV. Damayan and Bayanihan: Framework for Developing Resiliency among Vulnerable Communities**

##### **Vulnerability and Resiliency**

Poverty and vulnerability to natural disasters are mutually linked while their effects are mutually reinforcing: natural disasters contribute to poverty while poverty is the most important determinant of vulnerability. In situations of natural disasters, poor households are the most vulnerable considering their housing locations, type of housing, level of access to social services, sources of employment, access to assets and resources (World Bank and National Disaster Coordinating Council (2003). Further, the World Bank and NDCC (2003) noted that the poverty-vulnerability to natural disaster link is often reinforced by “rapid urbanization, environmental degradation and the increasing risk of environmental disasters, whether as a result of direct human impact and or from climate change” (p. 7).

In conceptualizing both poverty and vulnerability, there is a need to highlight the importance of social protection, those provided by both the government and the private sector, as a policy tool for the reduction of vulnerability and poverty (Tandon and Hasan, 2005).

The poor is not a homogenous lot. Although levels of income and consumption are important factors in determining who the poor people are, there are however, other elements to be considered. For instance, a household has better access to health, education and other public services than another household but both of them are at same income level, then the two cannot be considered to be equally poor (Kozel and Parker, n.d.). Lesser accessibility also increases a household’s vulnerability for it deprives them of basic needs and services. Holling (in Downing and Franklin. n.d.; p.1) stated that “vulnerability comes from a loss of resilience”.

Resiliency has various meanings. As such, requires further theoretical discourse and ramifications as well as an urgent need to develop indicators in measuring resiliency (Peacock et. al, 2008). According to Peacock et al. (2008), in the context of natural disaster discourse, Timmerman (1981) has applied the concept of resilience to social systems related to natural hazards, thus, defining it as “the capacity of a system, or part of a system, to absorb and recover from hazardous events” (p.5).

##### **Bayanihan and Damayan**

The word *bayanihan* is derived from the Tagalog word *bayan* which means town or country depending on the context. The term refers to any communal voluntary effort to achieve a common goal. It is a common practice in Philippine towns wherein community members help their neighbor move to a new place, repair homes or build communal

infrastructures. On the other hand, the practice of *damayan* shows the community's solidarity through compassion. It is a practice that lessens another person's grief through being there for them. A common example is *pakikiramay* (consoling), observed during a time of death in a family; friends and neighbors express sympathy for one's loss and often give money to defray burial costs. Other examples include offering solace or advice during times of grief or misfortunes.

*Bayanihan* and *damayan* are indigenous practices of support that is often utilized by people especially in poorer communities in the country. In times of natural disasters, they utilized *bayanihan* and *damayan* as support as well as coping mechanisms to tide over the disaster. Especially in situations when external support is limited or lacking, poor people rely on themselves for survival and recovery. As Hilhorts cited in Marianti (2007), stated that "It has been estimated that no more than 10 percent of survival in emergencies can be attributed to external sources of relief aid" (p. 23). Further, Marianti (2007) noted that people are becoming aware that comprehensive disaster management systems should not be the sole concern of the government. Instead, it should be reinforced by the participation of local people as well as tapping local capacities including local knowledge and expertise, resources and social capital, among others. It has been proven in many situations, where local people organized committees to respond to emergency situations, which was borne out of their awareness that in order for them and their communities to survive, they have to rely on themselves. Moreover, Marianti (2007) noted that similar studies (Bankoff 2003; Blaikie et al, 1994) had observed that people, particularly those residing in disaster-prone areas tend to developed 'extensive knowledge and practices' (p. 23) on ways of coping with disasters.

### **Damayan and Bayanihan: Indigenous Coping Mechanisms of Communities for Survival and during Typhoons and Floods**

#### ***Bayanihan and Damayan in the Daily Lives of People***

*Damayan* and *Bayanihan* are indigenous mechanisms of support often used as social resource among poorer communities in the Philippines. It is naturally woven in the rubric of the Filipino daily lives and culture, especially in rural areas.

*Damayan* is manifested in the day-to-day interactions among neighbors or community members. For instance, asking rice or viand from a neighbor when one gets short of rice or viand during meals or asking fruits or vegetables from a neighbor's garden. In times of calamities and unhappy situations, neighbors extend emotional support to those who experience misfortunes. When there is death in a family or a fire gutted one's house and properties, neighbors are source of comfort during bereavement and grief. Aside from emotional support, neighbors mobilized themselves to solicit materials and financial resources to ensure that the dead neighbor has a decent burial or the house of the fire victim is rebuilt.

On the other hand, the *bayanihan* practice is strongly manifested during occasions that need additional human power such as building a neighbor's house, during planting

season when a neighbor has no money to hire labor, building canals, temporary bridges and dirt roads and cleaning riverbanks. It is also practiced during special occasions like weddings, baptisms, birthdays and funerals where neighbors render labor and time to take on work related to the occasion.

### ***Bayanihan and Damayan during Pre-Disaster Situations***

*Bayanihan* and *damayan* provide the symbols and mechanisms of support in material and resource-deprived communities to help them in their daily struggle to survive. However, in times of extreme events like natural disasters, these mechanisms are tapped by the poor as resources in coping from the impacts of these extreme events.

Since the people of the barangays under study experience typhoons and flooding repeatedly, they consider these extreme events already part of their daily lives. Based from their experiences of typhoons and flooding and the disaster awareness provided by the Barangay Council (local government unit at the community level) through its Barangay Disaster Coordinating Councils (BDCC), people are aware on what to do in preparation for these extreme events.

The barangays in Polangui, especially those most affected barangays (Kinale and Balangibang) where an entire day of moderate rainfall already triggers the river nearby to swell, the people are much aware of mitigation measures. During the dry season, the Barangay Council and the BDCC in the respective barangays lead in mobilizing the people - men and women, young and old through the *bayanihan* system to collectively clean the creeks and stack sandbags at the back of houses, especially those houses located near the river in preparation for flooding during the rainy season. In Barangays San Francisco and Cabagnan, areas prone to landslides during the typhoon seasons, the people, in the spirit of *bayanihan*, collectively fortify sloping areas with stone walling to prevent erosion during the typhoon season. Similarly, in Barangays Bonga and Matanag, areas situated at the foot of Mt. Mayon that are prone to lahar flows during typhoon season, the people collectively stack sand bags near the river in anticipation of the possible lahar flows. Likewise, aware of the effects of cutting of trees, both women and men, patrol and guard the foot of Mt. Mayon to deter other people from cutting trees.

When there is a coming typhoon, the *purok* (district) system becomes an effective mechanism for early warning system. The Barangay Council and the BDCC mobilized the *purok* leader to serve as conduit for information about the situation. The *purok* leader leads in the evacuation of her/his *purok* members to safer grounds.

### ***Bayanihan and Damayan in Disaster Situations***

The community serves as the first line of defense in times of extreme events like typhoons and flooding, especially when external support is not yet available. Based on their experiences of past typhoons and floods, the respondents are well aware that external support may or may not come, especially when the devastation covers several areas in the province. Despite the availability of a budget for disaster situations at the

barangay level (5% of the barangay Internal Revenue Allotment is allocated to disaster), the respondents are well aware that the budget is limited and they rationalized that the most affected should be prioritized. Such awareness helped minimize conflicts during distribution of emergency support.

Having no one to turn to when the disaster strikes, the community people rely on one another for support, economically and emotionally. The men sub-divided themselves into groups to visit each family to ensure that everyone is safe and comforted. When the community needs to evacuate to safer grounds, the women, children and the elderly members of the community are assisted to the evacuation centers while the men organized themselves into teams and patrol the community to ensure that livestock and valuables are not stolen. With the presence of men patrolling and guarding the community, the people are assured that their houses are safe from burglars and eventually are willing to get relocated. Such mechanism minimizes the resistance of community members to stay in evacuation centers. Based from their past disaster experiences, despite their knowledge of the danger of staying in the community, many people have resistance to stay in evacuation centers because of burglary in the community and coupled by the discomfort they experienced in evacuation center primarily the congestive living quarters, poor sanitation, lack of basic facilities like water, fuel and toilets.

In addition, the people don't want to queue for food ration. Too many of the respondents of the study, find such act as very humiliating that reminds them of the deplorable situation they are into. And since the *purok* system works as an effective mechanism in disaster situations, they find that distribution of relief goods is most helpful using the *purok* system, it does not only lift their dignity and morale but also see themselves as survivors rather than helpless victims.

As experienced by the respondents, those affected by the floods in Polangui stayed in evacuation centers for a couple of days but had to return to their houses as flood water subsided. But for those barangays in Legazpi, especially those affected by the lahar flows or strong typhoons, they had experienced staying in evacuation centers for nearly three months. At this point, the spirit of *bayanihan* and *damayan* served as their strength. In the spirit of *damayan*, the men and women utilized the "group talk" to speak out their feelings and experiences to unload their emotional burden, anxiety and grief. For the men the drinking sessions at nights were used as venue to speak out how they feel and affected by the disaster. Similarly, the women sat in groups to talk about the experiences to unload as well as reaffirmed their faith in God. For those who have lost their loved ones, other community members encouraged the bereaved families to talk it out and speak comforting words to the bereaved. Faith in God and the unity and support of one another are considered by respondents to be very important at this point.

### ***Experiences***

Respondents in the two barangays in Polangui noted the unexplained fear, stress and anxiety they have expressed upon seeing the flood rushed in and the level of water grew tremendously in so short a time filling up the first storey of those with two storey

houses while those in one storey units not a trace of their rooftops are visible. The primary concern of families is to survive and reach safer grounds and since the flood is recurrent, the people had developed the awareness to prepare ropes where family members are tied down to ensure that n one will be separated during flood situations. Surviving, being the primary concern of many families are not aware of the particular conditions they are – some are soaked in rainwater, sick, weak due to old age and one has just delivered a baby. For those struggling to reach safer grounds, it is very comforting to see other neighbors whose houses have rooftops offering their houses, feeding others, providing dry clothes and administering medicines to those who caught colds and coughs due to prolonged exposure to the cold flood. Similarly, the respondents in the barangays of Legazpi experienced the same feelings but the comfort provided by other neighbors like offering comforting words like “*makakaraon din tayo, may awa ang diyos*” (we can survive this situation through the help of God) or “*kaya natin ito*” (we can survive) and prayers, touching the hands of others, somehow gave them inner strengths to cope with the situations despite anxiety and depression.

For 9 out of 10 anxiety indicators, more than 50% of respondents answered with “a little bit/quite a bit”. Only the anxiety indicator Trembling fell below 50% with a response of 42% and 42.5% for most affected and least affected communities respectively. (See Table 1)

Table 1. Anxiety Index		
Anxiety Symptoms	Most Affected	Least Affected
<b>Suddenly scared for no reason</b>		
Not at all	41.0	36.5
A little/quite a bit	55.5	52.5
Extremely	3.5	11.0
<b>Feeling fearful</b>		
Not at all	16.5	24.0
A little/quite a bit	76.0	66.0
Extremely	7.5	10.0
<b>Faintness, dizziness or weakness</b>		
Not at all	29.0	31.5
A little/quite a bit	66.5	60.5
Extremely	4.5	8.0
<b>Nervousness or shakiness inside</b>		
Not at all	18.0	19.0
A little/quite a bit	69.0	68.5
Extremely	13.0	12.5
<b>Heart pounding or racing</b>		
Not at all	34.0	33.5
A little/quite a bit	57.0	58.0
Extremely	9.0	8.5
<b>Trembling</b>		
Not at all	52.5	50.0
A little/quite a bit	42.0	42.5



Extremely	5.5	7.5
<b>Feeling tensed or keyed up</b>		
Not at all	36.5	30.5
A little/quite a bit	57.0	62.0
Extremely	6.5	7.5
<b>Headaches</b>		
Not at all	20.5	23.0
A little/quite a bit	74.5	69.0
Extremely	5.0	8.0
<b>Spells of terror and panic</b>		
Not at all	32.5	35.0
A little/quite a bit	59.0	57.0
Extremely	8.5	8.0
<b>Feeling restless and can't stand still</b>		
Not at all	34.5	40.0
A little/quite a bit	63.0	54.5
Extremely	2.5	5.5

Despite the situations they experience during disasters, almost all respondents answered “not at all” for the indicator “thoughts of ending your life” at 92.5% for most affected and 91% least affected. For both the most affected and least affected communities, the depression indicator that garnered the highest answer of “extremely” was Crying Easily at 20.5% and 15% respectively. For the categorical answer of “a little bit/quite a bit” 8 out of 15 depression indicators received a score higher than 50%. Feeling lonely has the highest number of occurrence at 74.4% and 72% respectively.

Table 2. Depression Index		
Depression Symptoms	Most Affected	Least Affected
<b>Feeling low in energy, slowed down</b>		
Not at all	31.5	30.5
A little/quite a bit	64.0	63.5
Extremely	4.5	6.0
<b>Blaming yourself for things</b>		
Not at all	57.5	50.0
A little/quite a bit	41.0	46.5
Extremely	1.5	3.5
<b>Crying easily</b>		
Not at all	17.5	19.5
A little/quite a bit	62.0	65.5
Extremely	20.5	15.0
<b>Loss of sexual interest or pleasure</b>		
Not at all	66.0	61.5
A little/quite a bit	30.0	35.0
Extremely	4.0	3.5

<b>Poor appetite</b>		
Not at all	44.0	36.0
A little/quite a bit	54.5	62.5
Extremely	1.5	1.5
<b>Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep</b>		
Not at all	34.5	34.0
A little/quite a bit	60.0	59.5
Extremely	5.5	6.5
<b>Feeling helpless about the future</b>		
Not at all	53.8	45.5
A little/quite a bit	39.7	51.5
Extremely	6.5	3.0
<b>Feeling blue</b>		
Not at all	31.2	28.5
A little/quite a bit	66.4	69.0
Extremely	2.5	2.5
<b>Feeling lonely</b>		
Not at all	20.1	22.5
A little/quite a bit	74.4	72.0
Extremely	5.5	5.5
<b>Thoughts of ending your life</b>		
Not at all	92.5	91.0
A little/quite a bit	7.5	8.5
Extremely	0.0	0.5
<b>Feeling of being trapped or caught</b>		
Not at all	92.0	86.5
A little/quite a bit	7.5	12.0
Extremely	0.5	1.5
<b>Worrying too much about things</b>		
Not at all	29.6	28.5
A little/quite a bit	64.3	64.0
Extremely	6.0	7.5
<b>Feeling no interest in things</b>		
Not at all	71.4	64.5
A little/quite a bit	28.6	34.0
Extremely	0.0	1.5
<b>Feeling everything is an effort</b>		
Not at all	77.4	69.5
A little/quite a bit	21.6	29.0
Extremely	1.0	1.5
<b>Feeling of worthlessness</b>		
Not at all	78.4	69.5
A little/quite a bit	20.1	29.5
Extremely	1.5	1.0

To see the effect of *damayan* in anxiety and depression levels, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used. There is a negative correlation between friend support with both anxiety and depression symptoms indicating that as a person sought more support from friends, their anxiety/depression levels dropped. The same is observed with organization membership. Those in organizations or groups have a rich social capital to turn to for help and emotional support in times of need. In this light, utilizing existing social mechanisms in delivery of psycho-social support may improve the results of psycho-social aid administered to an affected community. (See Table 3)

Table 3. Correlation Coefficient of Anxiety and Depression Symptoms				
Social Support	Anxiety Symptoms	P-Value	Depression Symptoms	P-Value
Friend Support	-.146	.000	-.099	.01
Number of Affiliated Organizations	-.096	n.s.	-.054	n.s.

### ***Bayanihan and Damayan in Post Disaster Situations***

Recovery from the effects of the disasters becomes the pre-occupation of the community members after the disaster. The focus is on how to rebuild what was destroyed by the floods and typhoons. Those stricken by the flood have to recondition their farms. Families who are better off hired extra hand to work in the farm while those who cannot afford to hire like the widows and very poor families can ask help from neighbors in exchange for doing carpentry work and other labor.

Those families whose farms are almost buried by lahar sought employment in nearby communities while the younger women look for work as domestic helpers in neighboring communities. Despite the individual and separate initiatives of community people in rebuilding their lives, still, the *bayanihan* and the *damayan* spirit are alive among the communities under study. Houses and fences of neighbors were built through the *bayanihan* system. Likewise, community infrastructures like school buildings, bridges and roads ruined by the typhoon and flood were repaired through the collective labor of the men. Even in farm production, the *bayanihan* system was used to collectively work in farms on rotation basis.

In the case of people from Barangays Kinale and Balangibang in Polangui, who experienced perennial flooding throughout the year, they already considered flooding as part of their everyday living. Being accustomed to the recurring floods, they are knowledgeable about the floods and have developed mitigating measures as well as resiliency in living with the flood. The community people are very alert to observe and record the intensity and duration of the rain and they are very knowledgeable what to do, where to go and what to bring. Over the years, after exhausted all possible means to bring the problem to the municipal and provincial governments and getting no concrete action, they are already cynical and leave everything to God.

## **Analysis**

The *bayanihan* and *damayan* are two forms of indigenous support mechanisms that have been used by people in poor communities in their struggle for day-to-day survival. However, in times of natural disasters when external support is not available or very limited, people in poorer communities tapped these indigenous mechanisms for survival and recovery. As gleaned from the study, *bayanihan* and *damayan* serve as representation of resilience in difficult situations brought about by typhoons and floods. Utilizing the indigenous forms of support like the *bayanihan* and *damayan* mechanisms, the people learned to developed internal resiliency, both at the individual and collective levels.

*Bayanihan* and *damayan* serve as symbol of hope and can be e associated to a support system that one can depend on during extreme events. Since the communities are all resource-poor, *bayanihan* and *damayan* are considered part of their social capital that they can utilize both in their daily survival and during extreme events. With the recurrence of typhoons and floods, people in the communities under study had gained knowledge and strategies on how to cope, overcome and survive from the effects of these events collectively as one community. Out of their experiences, they gained lessons and insights that eventually developed into a knowledge system on how to manage disaster situations. *Bayanihan* and *damayan* served as crucial elements in the process.

## **Policy Implications**

First, *bayanihan* and *damayan* can be utilized especially by the local government units in mobilizing people for disaster mitigation, emergency and recovery. Like what have shown in the study, aware of the ill effects of cutting down trees, the people, men and women alike, voluntarily safeguard the cutting down of trees to avoid erosion. The spirit of volunteerism shown through *bayanihan* and *damayan* can be utilized in mitigation measures like reforestation, stonewalling of rivers, etc. During emergency situations, the *purok* system can be utilized as a strategy in relief distribution allowing people to have control over the decision-making and distribution of relief support. Likewise, these mechanisms can be used in recovery and rehabilitation – at the physical, psychosocial and economic levels.

Second, *bayanihan* and *damayan* can be the spring board towards organizing people to address other concerns related to their poverty situation. Through the formation of strong organizations, resiliency of poor people can be strengthened. The formation of strong organizations like people's cooperatives or community-based livelihood organizations can be a strategy in developing sustainable livelihoods. Developing sustainable livelihoods can help strengthened people's capacity and resilience to disasters.

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