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SHELTER2HABITAT: DEVELOPING RESILIENT CITIES AFTER DISASTER Pre-findings of Cordaid's Urban Resilience programme in Guiuan, the Philippines

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Abstract

The paper presents the pre-findings of international NGO Cordaid's Urban Resilience programme in Guiuan, in the Philippines. The programme uses the recovery of housing as an entry point in the community with the aim of developing resilient habitats.

The Urban Resilience programme is based on Cordaid's experience in Guiuan since typhoon Haiyan severely damaged infrastructure in the region in 2013, and on an earlier recovery programme in Haiti. Its main objective is to develop resilient habitats, with communities driving the process.

Habitat refers to more than the house. It embraces the physical, economic and social networks that enable communities to flourish. Cordaid believes that communities that are in the recovery process are supported by truly participatory methods, in combination with technical assistance and access to affordable capital and other resources, are empowered to restore their habitats faster, at lower cost and according to their own needs. To ensure communities and their habitats are resilient to future hazards, shocks and stresses, it starts with a broad assessment that also includes a comprehensive risk assessment to identify the underlying factors and root causes of risk and needs to be transformed to increase resiliency.

To this end, five interrelated strategies are pursued to develop resilient habitats: community-driven processes; multi-stakeholder collaboration; integrated neighbourhood development; incremental development of the physical, economic and social infrastructure; and the transition from subsidy-based relief to market-based development. The latter two strategies are specifically focused on the housing process.

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Early findings suggest that these strategies are having some impact but that challenges remain.

Multiple stakeholders – communities, local authorities, donors, other NGOs, companies, etc. – have been involved from an early stage and this is already yielding results. Interventions with different entry points (e.g. water and sanitation) are aligned within a Resilient Community Action Planning (RCAP) process that is driven by the community. Donors' short-term, output-related agendas, however, remain a challenge to the success of this collaboration.

Integrated neighbourhood development is under pressure from inadequate funding for local authorities and the top-down nature of disaster recovery funding. This leads to competition within communities for funding that is available, jeopardising social cohesion and incremental development of the wider infrastructure by creating a gap between those dependent on subsidies and those who can afford to supplement them with their own funds.

In rebuilding damaged houses home-owners together with their builders design their own homes, supervise the construction and buy their own construction materials on the local market (owner-driven housing). The builders of the community and the home-owners were further trained in safer construction practices. After some problems with quality, master builders selected from the community now ensure construction quality through daily monitoring, while training is given to remind project members of the importance of sharing their technical knowledge.

The move from subsidies to more market-based loans has not progressed as far as envisaged, partly due to continued insecurity of tenure and partly due to the reluctance from the Micro-Finance sector to get involved already in the early recovery. Making this transition depends on commitment from both government and the financial sector to adapt their policies.

The biggest challenge seems to be finding a balance between community participation and output-driven recovery funding. Participation demands long-term commitment with sometimes uncertain outcomes, while recovery funding tends to focus on the short term and on concrete results at household level.

This paper describes how Cordaid, with some success, links community recovery to a comprehensive participatory urban planning and development processes that is much broader than shelter assistance. Its ultimate aim is to find strategies for distributing scarce resources more equitably over a larger population. To this end, it organizes communities to become strong counterparts to more powerful stakeholders to manage future risks collaboratively.

Keywords: urban resilience, housing, community participation

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Authors' biography: the authors are interested in the complexity of cities and the challenge of rapid urbanisation. Having worked in different projects (post-disaster urban programme in Port-

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au-Prince, Urban Resilience programme in the Philippines) together around the globe respectively as an architect, urban planner, shelter advisor or economist, they explore how to make sure how cities can develop in a fair way.