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## **Planning for Recovery and Resettlement in Tacloban after Typhoon Haiyan**

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### **Abstract**

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Asia and the Pacific is considered the most disaster prone region in the world, both in terms of lives lost and economic damages. This contribution discusses resettlement initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region within the recovery after hydro-meteorologic disaster against the background of local vulnerability and governance constellations. When Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in 2013 millions of people were displaced. Particularly the City of Tacloban on the island of Leyte was an urban epicentre of disaster. 90 percent of the nearly 30,000 houses that were destroyed here are situated along the coast, among them 10,000 inhabited by the urban poor, many of them informal settlers. How successful is the recovery and relocation process? Did sufficient coordination take place within the governance processes between stakeholders? How does resettlement affect the vulnerability and livelihood of residents? To answer these questions, expert interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders were conducted in October 2014 in Tacloban.

The city government in collaboration with UN-HABITAT drafted a recovery plan for the development of a new settlement within the city municipality, with an aim at reducing the risk of future disaster and the vulnerability of the population. The Tacloban Recovery and Rehabilitation Plan (TRRP) is underpinned by "good governance," based on the principles of "building back better," and outlines the city's rebuilding priorities and planning initiatives for infrastructure and settlement. It defines growth-oriented districts and describes the development of "safe zones", including a project in the city's north. Other international NGOs have been trying to help informal settlers recover and rebuild within No-Build-Zones along the coast that were declared by the



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national government. Fishermen in Tacloban affected by this policy protested against the designation of the No-Build-Zones. Beyond that, thousands of residents continue to live in shelters. Some goals of the TRRP have been achieved, but progress continues to be slow. While 14,000 new permanent houses are needed, roughly 2000 houses have been built to-date. Further, a lack of consultation with stakeholders in the recovery planning process is noted, and a gap is identified between what the recovery plan calls for and what is seen to happen on the ground.

The city population included a large percentage of urban poor before the typhoon. Many residents remain vulnerable. The unequal distribution of funds, insecure land and housing tenure, and sustaining the livelihoods of residents are perceived as major problems in the recovery phase. Those still waiting in tents for more permanent solutions are even more vulnerable than before due to lacking livelihood opportunities and being uprooted from their communities and their traditional social support systems. These comprise their families, friends and relatives who lived together or in close proximity of each other in traditional neighbourhoods known as Barangays. There are fears that their current shelter situation will become permanent. This is mirrored to a certain degree by the circumstances of the relocated residents in the new settlement, with the difference that the need to create economic opportunity in these areas is acknowledged by the city government and expressed in the recovery plan. The livelihood of many of those who informally rebuilt their settlements in the No-Build-Zone was based on fishing, which is the reason why they wanted to return to the coast. They reportedly didn't own the land their settlements were on, yet intended to stay there, as negotiations on the Barangay level on permitting use of certain properties were ongoing. However, their poverty-related vulnerability may increase if economic opportunity is focused elsewhere, e.g. in the new settlement. In addition, residents of the informal settlement may experience increased risks along the coastline.

The results show that vulnerability and livelihood strongly influence the resettlement scheme as an integrated planning process encompassing housing, infrastructure, and economic opportunity.



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While much needs to be done, the plan is an important instrument for local actors to define recovery goals for the city. Increased cooperation with international actors is welcome. Moreover the extent to which the plan guides the city's recovery and is operationalised on the ground contributes to our better understanding on how the urban context shapes resettlement processes. Even in developing countries, there may be local institutional actors in place that international aid organisations can collaborate with in order to ensure a reduction of risk, and as a result, of the vulnerability of the population, and to realise a more disaster-resilient community.

**Keywords:** Asia-Pacific, Typhoons, recovery planning, governance, vulnerability

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### **Author's Biography**

**Dr. Kammerbauer** Dr. Mark Kammerbauer is a German-American urbanist. He received a diploma in architecture (Technical University of Munich), a Master of Science degree in urban studies (Institute for European Urban Studies, Bauhaus University Weimar) and the title Doktor-Ingenieur (Bauhaus University Weimar). He has worked in practice in the USA, Germany and the Netherlands. Since 2011 he has held academic positions at the Technical University of Munich, the School of Applied Sciences Nuremberg, and the University of Queensland (Visiting Fellow in Planning). His research covers urban recovery after disaster in regard to planning and social vulnerability.

**Dr. Mateo-Babiano** Dr. Iderlina B. Mateo-Babiano is an early career researcher who joined the University of Queensland in 2010 after previously being affiliated with the Department of Transport and Main Roads. She brings a strong multi-disciplinary background as well as industry and public sector experience. Her extensive work experience covers consulting, research and teaching in a number of Asian countries in the fields of transport, infrastructure and development planning.