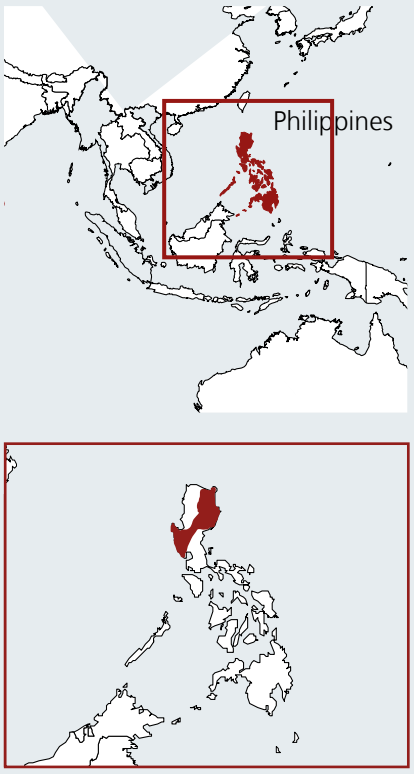
A.26 Philippines - 2010 - Typhoon Megi

Case study:

Country:
Philippines
Disaster:
Typhoon Megi
Disaster date:
October 18th 2010
No. of houses destroyed:
30,048 (destroyed)
118,174 (damaged)
Project target population:
49,765 people (9,953 households) in Cagayan, Isabela, Kalinga and La Union
Materials Cost per household:
160 USD for damaged houses, 340 USD for destroyed houses through cash vouchers



Project timeline

Project description
Vouchers were distributed to provide materials for the repair of 9,953 shelters. Two types of vouchers were tried. Initially people could choose from a given list of materials. Due to supply issues the project was adjusted so that people could choose the materials that they wanted up to a given value and from an approved list of suppliers. Families also received information on how to reinforce their homes against typhoons.

Strengths and weaknesses

✓ The cash voucher approach ensured that beneficiaries played a bigger role in their own recovery.
✓ According to a project evaluation people assisted felt that orientation and information sessions enabled them to understand what they were entitled to receive.
✓ Recommending several hardware stores allowed people to shop around, but also allowed them to choose the most convenient stores.
✓ Vouchers allowed people to identify and prioritise their own needs.
✓ The value of the vouchers was sufficient to meet the immediate shelter needs. However many people added their own resources to repair their houses.
✓ The majority of people supported by the project preferred vouchers to direct cash. Their main reason was that vouchers enabled them to avoid spending cash on other needs. It also allowed the organisation to agree fixed prices with the suppliers and guarantee quality.
× Initial attempts to restrict which materials could be used failed due to supply shortages following a government ban on harvesting timber.
× Some dishonest suppliers could cheat beneficiaries of some items and claim them in invoices. Financial controls aiming to prevent this required a very large amount of documentation and massively increased the workload for project and finance staff.
× A minority of beneficiaries colluded with suppliers and used their cash vouchers for other unintended purposes. In part this was due to shelter not being seen by all of them as the highest priority.
× Not all households adopted improved typhoon-resilient construction techniques. The project could have better promoted and trained in safer construction techniques.

Vouchers were provided that could be used to purchase materials up to a given cash value.
Photo: Hajime Matsunaga/IFRC

Before the typhoon

The Philippines has a history of storms. In late 2009 Typhoons Ketsana and Parma caused considerable damage. Three of the districts hit in 2009 were also hit by typhoon Megi in 2010.

After the typhoon

Typhoon Megi caused significant damage to houses, livelihoods and infrastructure. The damage was mainly due to the powerful category 5 winds when the typhoon made landfall. The damage was largely focused on five provinces.

Two weeks after Typhoon Megi, heavy rains caused further damage. The typhoon and the rains combined further stretched community coping capacities.

Implementation

The shelter interventions had two components:

- Category I - shelter repair kits for families whose homes were damaged.
- Category II - shelter repair kits for families whose homes were destroyed.

Initial plan

For Category I shelter repair kits, families were provided 7,000 PHP (150 USD) .They could collect any combination of materials and tools in a predetermined list from a shop of their choosing, as long as the total cost did not exceed the allocated amount.

For Category II shelter repair kits, each beneficiary family would also receive an additional commodity voucher worth 7,000 PHP (150 USD) to obtain the same materials and tools as in Category I shelter repair kits. Under this category the families would also receive the following materials to enable them to place poles in reinforced concrete footings:

- three bags of cement,
- six timber posts - 6"x6" (150x150mm) or 4"x4" (100x100mm),
- eight x 6m, 10mm diameter steel bars,
- four x 6m, 8mm diameter bars.

Revised implementation

In February 2011 a government ban on harvesting timber was established. This lead to a new methodology being established. In this approach, people were provided with cash vouchers, which they then use to purchase their choice of shelter materials.

Families are not given a predefined list of materials. Instead, the organisation conducted price surveys and recommended several shops from which beneficiaries could obtain shelter materials.

Families repaired or rebuilt shelters through *bayanihan*. This is a tradition common in Philippine rural areas, where community members help each other. Through *bayanihan*, those households who are physically unable to build [older people, people with disabilities, households headed by women and households headed by children] are supported by their fellow community members.

The period during which vouchers could be redeemed was limited to a fixed period. This amount of time depended upon the capacity of the shops and number of beneficiaries per shop. Selected shops were required to display fixed prices of main shelter materials throughout the time.

Each voucher could only be redeemed in one shop. However, beneficiaries of Category II shelter repair kits received two vouchers of USD 150 and were able to redeem each voucher at separate shops.

Selection of beneficiaries

As relief operations progressed, the organisation reverified the beneficiary lists. Details were initially provided in lists by the government. During reverification, the sites of all damaged or destroyed homes

Families rebuilt the shelters through community self-help.
Photo: IFRC

The organisation monitored the shops. Photo: Hajime Matsunaga/IFRC

A typical house rebuilt using the grants. Photo: IFRC

were visited, to assess the extent of damage, and check that families met agreed beneficiary selection criteria. This was to ensure that the most vulnerable were supported and that they had not received assistance from other actors.

Shelter assistance targeted families that lacked the capacity to repair or rebuild their homes. In addition to this, the beneficiary selection criteria prioritised families headed by women without income, families headed by children, persons with disabilities, families with young children or elderly family members, families from ethnic minorities and other socially excluded groups.

Team members undertook continuous reverification to ensure that only deserving beneficiaries received shelter assistance. This took into account the reality that other actors could have served some of the targeted beneficiaries in between the initial reverification and the period they were scheduled to receive shelter materials.

Technical solutions

Before the beneficiaries received the materials, they attended orientation sessions organised by project teams composed of carpenters, and project staff. The orientation sessions highlighted basic building techniques. During the sessions, beneficiaries were provided with posters showing how to construct typhoon-resistant shelters to encourage them to construct houses with steady foundations, and to place poles in concrete footings with reinforcement.

In the initial approach of commodity vouchers, carpenters were part of the project team and participated in beneficiary orientation sessions. Their role extended to assisting beneficiaries in selecting materials and guiding them when repairing or rebuilding their houses.

In the new approach of providing cash vouchers, carpenters were no longer a part of project teams. Instead, beneficiaries were encouraged to engage the services of carpenters independently. This was because beneficiaries purchased their choice of materials according to their respective, unique needs.

Logistics supply

Throughout provision of shelter assistance using the cash voucher system, team members monitored the market prices and visited designated shops on a regular basis to observe how families were obtaining shelter materials. Through this monitoring, the team was able to recommend several shops from which people could obtain shelter materials.

These visits ensured that shops applied fixed pricing for basic shelter items as agreed prior to distribution. This helped to eliminate the possibility of shops inflating prices or overcharging beneficiaries.

People in the project were also encouraged to conduct their own independent comparison of prices, to bargain for better prices with the shops, and to decide independently from which of the recommended shops to redeem their vouchers.

Though prices varied slightly from shop to shop, monitoring showed that beneficiaries were able to select shops from which they got most competitive prices and therefore more materials from the fixed voucher amount. The shops saw an opportunity to make profit from larger sales volume rather than per item.