

Reportage

Philippines: Three years after super typhoon Yolanda's passing, social reconstruction of damaged communities: The experience of MiHands in Ormoc, island of Leyte

Monday 27 March 2017, by [ROUSSET Pierre](#) (Date first published: 15 November 2016).

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Yolanda (Haiyan by its international name), the strongest typhoon touching land ever registered, devastated the center of the Philippine archipelago in November 2013 [1]. In July 2016, two years and eight months after, when I landed on Tacloban airport, life had returned to normal. The churches, all new, were dominating — they were rebuilt in priority, before the hospitals, even if it were possible to receive communion under a canopy, while an operating room could prove very useful to a surgeon. Carcasses of buildings that have not yet been rebuilt still stand and there is what one does not see: these “internal refugees”, these “displaced persons”, still without homes, pushed away in the peripheral areas or recently driven to the mountainside.



Tacloban : the bow of a ship projected into the land in November 2013 became a symbol of the violence of the catastrophe.

The countryside is green once more, even in places where Yolanda left nothing more than pieces of gray mud. The village housing is linear here, stretching through the roads. The barangays [2] follow one another continuously, each with its elementary school and children in school uniforms.

A few gaps show rice and sugar cane fields or shaggy-looking coconut trees and ripped off trunks that remind us that there used to be plantations there, forced to the ground by the violence of the wind. In places where the latter have been replanted, the coconut trees are still young, just like those around the houses. Fortunately, fruit trees grow quicker – it is the season for mangoes.

The coconut plantations cover more than 30% of crop land in Leyte and copra [3] constitutes the primary export product. The extent of the socio-economic disaster provoked by Yolanda can be partly explained by this dependence on industrial farming incapable of resisting very strong winds. Through the port of Tacloban (and without having to pass by Manila), the island exports rice, corn, and sugar cane.

We are making headway to the northwest and the renovation work is becoming frequent on the road. Nothing to do with Yolanda, I was told. We are on a geological fault line and the earth moves.

We have regained the coastal plain after passing a chain of mountains. The region is deemed safe and quiet. Unlike Mindanao, there are no check points, these baffle filters that allow the police or the army to control vehicles.

Dogs shamelessly occupy the streets and grudgingly move aside as our car drives through. Goats, splendidly colored cocks and chickens graze or peck by the wayside, attached with a cord.

Motorcycles are omnipresent - they are the main public transport here.

We have arrived at our destination - the port city of Ormoc where MiHands operates. [4].



The office of MiHands in Ormoc

ESSF, our association [5], has been relating with this coalition since its foundation, normally operating within the big southern island of Mindanao. We appreciated its effectiveness and the relevance of its conception of aid. Thus, as soon as we learned that it was organizing aid for the victims of super typhoon Haiyan, we started to support it, including financially, within the extent of our possibilities.

The intervention of MiHands is a long-term plan, and each phase of its projects is crucial - from emergency aid to rehabilitation and social reconstruction which is made sustainable due to the self-organization of the disaster victims.

My visit (5 days) in July 2016 was too short for me to be able to experience a bit the daily lives of the persons I met; nonetheless, it has enabled me to measure the progress made, as well as the difficulties and the challenges met.

Ensure self-organization of the victims

MiHands' objective is to help bring together the needed conditions for it to eventually withdraw from the community as quickly as possible. The projects are not only elaborated in dialogue with the concerned communities, but the latter should be able to consider them their own, becoming themselves the project managers. When that happens, they no longer need the presence of MiHands on the site.

This approach is fundamental at a time when humanitarian aid has become a “competitive internal economic sector”. Far too many NGOs try to take advantage by setting themselves as obligatory intermediaries, building themselves up as companies with a wide range of salaries and overpaid heads of staff. MiHands, on the contrary, bears a militant approach of Aid, based on the mobilization of a network of member associations of the coalition, reducing to a minimum the number of salaried workers (paid modestly) and administrative expenses.

In the case of super typhoon Yolanda, MiHands had to face three specific difficulties.

Firstly, the extent of the devastation. The trauma is on the same scale as the violence of the wind. Still today, the coming of a tropical storm revives terrifying memories – a bamboo house being lifted up, swinging in the air, then falling down on its occupants. Trauma too is felt as one discovers that everything has been destroyed for kilometers and kilometers – with no neighboring zone spared to fall back upon. The poor had no other choice than to stay in place, as disaster victims, or to come and swell the ranks of the squatter areas of Manila, Cebu, Mindanao...

Considering the depth of the trauma and the wide extent of the devastation, the first stages of the intervention by MiHands, from emergency aid to reconstruction, have been particularly long and delicate [6]. Assuring the food and material survival of the residents is not enough. Medical and psychological aid, special initiatives for the children are not less important.

It is necessary (can one say especially necessary?) to show great respect to the victims. Indeed, they find themselves in a situation of total dependence, have lost control over their lives and can easily be manipulated. They have to be given the time and the means to be able to decide once again by and for themselves.

Projecting themselves outside their own “borders”. MiHands is a coalition set up in Mindanao. The decision to provide assistance to the Yolanda victims was a big one to take, to manifest inter-regional solidarity. It could not get the usual support from its network of organizations already rooted in the various communities. It had to investigate in order to define where to intervene (in the areas where people have been left to themselves and received no help); then send groups of volunteers to bring and distribute emergency aid packs and provide medical and psychological aid. There are now three persons residing in Ormoc who permanently carry on the solidarity activities of MiHands.



The staff of MiHands in Ormoc: Boboy and Minda on the left, and Samy on the right of the photo

No organizational experience on which to back on. Finally, the communities where MiHands operates never had any organizational tradition, not even religious. It is even more surprising, considering that the influence of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP, Maoist Stalinist) is known to be significant in this region. The explanation could be that Leyte is politically under the authority of the neighboring island of Samar, which occupies a particular place in the national structure of the CPP. It served as the central base of the guerrilla, the New People’s Army. More than elsewhere, the priority has been the direct strengthening of the fighting units, a military approach leaving little space to the development of social movements.

The fact remains that there were no skills as to the basics of how an organization functions. A great humanitarian catastrophe destroys everything, including social movements that can disintegrate for a time; but the knowhow remains and can be reactivated. In the forsaken communities where MiHands intervenes, such traditions did not exist. Consequently, the instinctive reactions of survival were individualized, while no individual solution would enable the poor to get out of the misery. By clientelism, an elected official could make a round of the victims and distribute money “to rebuild houses”, then go, leaving the beneficiaries helpless – how can they rebuild their homes in such a devastated environment? So, the money just serves to improve the daily life, to buy a television or a karaoke, and everything remains in its actual state. The official will put the blame on the poor.

The prevailing individualism makes it so that, in the cities, neighboring families do not know each other, or, in the villages, do not cooperate regularly.

MiHands had to devote a lot of time to convince them of the usefulness of a collective organization; then transmit skills (calling and running a meeting, decision-making, conflict management, election of leaders, tasking, basic accounting, opening a bank account, auditing...); facilitate the links with local authorities, official registration of associations without which they will not be able to benefit from their rights, like official funding.



Business meetings at Don Potenciano Larrazabal (Ormoc City)

I was able to observe the result of this process. Nine people’s organizations (POs), clearly differentiated from NGOs were founded in four localities where MiHands operates – three farmers associations, two fisherfolks and four women’s groups (one for each locality)



The four localities where MiHands operates on the island of Leyte

The meetings I participated in were friendly, while applying certain “formalities”: signed attendance sheets, specific indications as to the number of members, organized discussions... They had to fight against the idea common to many where an association “belongs” to its president and define the eventual role of the members of the local councils (at the level of the barangay): they can join the organization without occupying key positions, as it should not be instrumentalized during elections.

People's organizations in fragile situations

The gravity of the situation after the passing of the typhoon obliged MiHands to engage in reconstruction activities in a global way, over a longer period than the three years initially planned. The intervention was implemented taking into account the marginalization of the devastated communities (they received very little aid from the authorities or from NGOs) and the possibility of impelling a process of people's self-organization.

Ormoc. The port city of Ormoc is comprised of more than 200,000 inhabitants. It is the economic, commercial and cultural center of Western Leyte. It thrives from agriculture, aquaculture, energy (production of geothermic electricity), industry, transport and tourism. A nearby industrial zone shelters a big phosphate company (for fertilizers) and an important copper refinery.

Ormoc already suffered from a humanitarian catastrophe in 1991, due to torrential floods provoked by the tropical storm Uring. This time, it received most of the aid distributed in the region. The districts that benefited look dashing with the walls newly repainted in ocher, red, blue, green... Evidently, not all has been rebuilt; nevertheless, MiHands directed their attention towards other localities, situated some ten kilometers further, east and north, that did not benefit from the same manna.

Nonetheless, to help overcome the isolation of a number of urban homes, it maintained its activity in the area where it helped put up a women's organization. Initially too, there were plans of supporting a Muslim community. This had a particular meaning for the MiHands coalition which promotes the active coalition among the "three peoples" of Mindanao, of which the Moros [7].

However, it turned out that the practical conditions for the implementation of actions were too difficult - the women left their homes early to sell at the market, spent the whole day there and no longer had time in the evening to come together and meet.

The Tambulilid Women's Organization (TaWO) [8] was founded in October 2014. Its members (presently 56 in number) have never before participated in a regular activity of any organization. "Before we did not know each other" the president noted. "Thanks particularly to the seminars initiated by MiHands, we got to know and like each other." The testimonies follow one after another, and all of a sudden, to the great surprise of the assembly, one of them began to speak to me in my language. As a migrant, she lived in France for three years. The world is truly small.

The members of TaWO have been meeting monthly since. They run a self-managed micro-finance activity which helps families in the development of small economic income-generating projects. I noted curiously that these projects resembled those presented to me in the villages - hog-raising, rice-planting, production of herbal medicinal plants.... The explanation was simple. The urban area of Ormoc extends over a vast surface where the urban and the rural penetrate into the other - it is in fact difficult to locate a "city center".



Ms. Marly Labrador—45 years old and member of Tambulilid Women's Organization (TaWO) was one of the direct beneficiaries of Gender Production Support Project (GPPS) from MMARDC—July 2016, Tambulilid, Ormoc City

Small rice cultivation in Tambulilid

Women. In all the barangays I visited, the women play an important role in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process of the communities initiated with the support of MiHands - as well as in the animation of meetings and associations.



In Palompon, in a well-ventilated chapel used as meeting place

Four associations of women have been formed:

- Tambulilid Women's Organization - (TaWO), brgy. Tambulilid (Ormoc), already mentioned above
- Bangkal Women's Association - (BAWA), brgy. Bangkal (Villaba municipality)
- Nagkahiusang Kababaehan Tuboran sa Kalamboan - United Women for Development or NATUKA), brgy. Don Potenciano Larrazabal (Ormoc City)
- Uswag Kababaehan Association - (Progress for Women or UKA), brgy. Lat-osan (municipality of Palompon).

With the exception of TaWO, all these organizations coordinate with mixed local people's organizations (fisherfolk, peasants). Without having the "monopoly", the women engage themselves actively in specific economic projects, which not only generate income for their families, but end up in improving the situation of the whole collectivity, becoming more self-reliant. Essentially needed goods are produced on the spot. They can buy them in small quantities for daily needs, without getting indebted, and spare themselves of transport costs, which can weigh on them heavily if the barangay is situated far from the commercial centers.

Evidently, these products deal with food, but may also include the making of clothes, pedicure or manicure services, etc. Skills and typically local products are once more put to value, particularly along the lines of bread or pastry making. I was able to benefit from these culinary traditions in each place I visited - to my most avid pleasure.



A tissue of socio-economic micro activities is constituted or reconstituted. What is important (giving these projects their originality) is the synergy initiated between individual or family-based initiatives, solidarity and self-managed micro-financing, which help them conduct more collective projects, the solidarity provided by local associations, the strengthening of social links, and the autonomy in the community. Aid policies take on a democratic scope (self-organization of the working classes) and

are no longer only economic (income generating). In fact, the durable success of economic projects is only assured by the continuity of “democratic power” carried on by the associations and by the solidarity mechanisms they ensure. Otherwise, each blow received (illness, indebtedness due to a death or a marriage...) results in the collapse of a micro-enterprise, the brutal impoverishment of a family, and the aggravation of social inequalities.

Many households have a main activity (fishing, rice cultivation...) and one or a few secondary activities - but this latter can in fact become the primary source of income. In this way, a couple used their right of access to micro-finance in order to open a sewing workshop, making school uniforms for the children. The wife takes care of the finishing touches (buttons, buttonholes, hook and eye...). The husband was sewing on a manual machine when I arrived. They hope to obtain an electric machine, which will allow them to work on thicker cloth materials like blue jeans.



The shadow of the wealthy

A major issue: the durability of the work of reconstruction for the benefit of the have-nots is constantly threatened by the power of the rich.

The friendly *hacendero* . My very first visit was at the village of Don Potenciano Larrazabal in the interior and which is still part of the municipality of Ormoc. I met the peasant and women's associations under a group of trees. On the background is a small building meant to offer protection in case of a storm - the people sought protection there in November 2013, but it was destroyed by the super typhoon. It was rebuilt, and in a more solid way.



The absence of irrigation is a major problem, while the organizations want to develop rice culture and freshwater aquaculture. My hosts were explaining this when a slender, fair-skinned, Spanish *meztizo* appeared and sat with us without asking anyone's permission. It was the *hacendero*, who owned the biggest sugarcane plantation in the place - incidentally, he employs a number of men from the community to cut cane. The boss invited himself to our meeting. He expressed in a friendly way: the peasants should indeed form a legal association to be able to demand the construction of an irrigation system from the municipality. He will support them. By the way, he himself had asked a long time ago but the process is complicated and costly. After he left, the discussion started again but somehow restrained. A MiHands staff member sharply made the remark that this big landowner is all the more favorable to the project as the irrigation system, set on his land, will belong to him.

The condition of the sugar workers in the traditional haciendas seems not to have changed much since my first stay in the Philippines in 1977, when I was able to visit a plantation in the province of

Negros Occidental, more to the west. However, the social control exerted by the traditional elite seems, at first glance, less “tight”, less total. Unfortunately, there was no possibility to speak about this with someone.

An aggressive landowner. We are now in the coastal municipality of Palompon, Brgy. Lat-osan, where MiHands operates. Houses which were damaged were repaired. The reconstruction of those which were completely destroyed – an intervention which costs much (materials to be bought) – has started. Mi-Hands furnished the raw material.



The dwellers were setting up the wooden structures when a man approached. It was the former owner of the land, which was distributed to the residents during the agrarian reform after 1986. He is firm in wanting to retrieve “his” good. He bluntly stated that it was not worth constructing the houses as in a few months he would expel whoever does not buy the land – at a high price. Boboy of MiHands dryly answered that only the Courts can make such decisions concerning expulsions.

The legislation concerning agrarian reform is complex. MiHands was able to take advantage of training provided by experts dealing with the rights of small fishermen but not yet concerning the beneficiaries for land distribution post 1986. The links with associations and NGOs operating in the city of Ormoc can prove to be precious, as this issue has already been carried before the Courts, and which gave a favorable decision to the residents.

When vital space is lacking. We are now on a narrow coastal strip, Brgy. Bangkal (municipality of Villaba). The houses come in single file, the doors facing the road while the back windows look out to the sea. Posts announce at regular intervals that this zone has been declared non constructible. It is impossible however to build the village much further within the interior. There are no plains in this area, and, often in this archipelago, no foothills to serve as buttresses either; the mountainside suddenly rises steeply.



The mangrove nursery

The fisherfolks are condemned to living between the road and the sea. We understand why they are interested in reconstituting the mangrove. This dense and marshy forest offers a favorable breeding place for fishes, crabs, shrimps, and protection too against the caprices of winds and oceans. A mangrove nursery and the breeding of seedlings on shallow coastal waters is one of the main projects of MiHands in this area.



Planting the mangrove in Bangkal

Insecurity comes from natural hazards; but also from the destruction of marine life by industrial fishing (however, there is little risk that the tourist industry ever takes interest in this coastal piece). MiHands, especially with the help of the Paris federation of Secours Populaire France, takes care of replacing the small boats that were destroyed by the typhoon, the buying of engines, as well as the making of light structures that facilitate the fish population density.



Sebastian Gariballa - 81 years old and member of Lactarian Fishermen Association (LFA) received a unit of local (artisan) from MiHands. His previous boat was damaged by the typhoon and he no longer could afford it. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, he was able to only thank MiHands for the opportunity to receive a new boat and according to him, he will now transfer the engine (owner of his old boat) to the newly received one - August 2020, Palamparan, Leyte

A fisherman received a new boat at Lat-osan, on which he shall put a motor.

Ensure support to popular communities

We can see that rehabilitation and reconstruction of damaged zones are a slow, hard and complex process, as they require know-how and multiple expertise - and because they run up against powerful long-standing interests. We do not necessarily realize this from the outside, when a specific project (construction of a well...) is funded, but this becomes clear when we follow the whole process. This process has an “institutional” aspect whose importance cannot be underestimated.

MiHands systematically establishes links with the local authorities, on the barangay and municipal levels, or with the departmental governmental representatives responsible for aid to victims or the fight against poverty. The trainings prepared for the popular organizations are also offered to municipal or barangay officers. I myself met some local officials and I observed that they are indeed often interested by the issues discussed, like in the case of the barangay captain of Tambulilid (Ormoc), by the concept of mutual aid that is being practiced by the TaWO women’s association. My presence struck him too: “You are the first donor to directly dialogue with the persons and associations concerned. The others are contented with meeting the authorities.”

The barangay captain of Bangkal (Villaba) became a real fan. She actively participated in the associations’ activities, pursued the local trainings with passion, and ended up the best student at the municipal level. One feels that she had pleasure in learning - she lives in the place - and in finding concrete solutions to the problems of her neighbors.

The accreditation of associations (a laborious process) and the links tied with the administration or local authorities enabled them to apply for funds from the Rehabilitation or against poverty funds office (effectively acquired in the case of Ormoc) and to request protective measures to be taken. The mayor of Villaba committed himself to promulgating a decree protecting marine waters, for them to remain in good quality in the places where the structures favoring the breeding of fish have

been set. It is also important that the financial audit of the associations is regularly done by an independent authority and in this case this task has been the responsibility of the barangay council.

The search for expertise sometimes comes on unexpectedly. Personal links were tied with the aquaculture head of USAID [9] residing in Ormoc. Contact was established with the Barangay Bangkal Fishermen's Association (BBFA) local councilors and the municipality of Villaba. A project was thus developed with Brgy Bangkal, and also Brgy Silad. And direct cooperation has been established between the small fisherfolk of the two localities.

The popular organizations fight so that the rights of the "small people" are recognized by the authorities and are legally protected. The level of politization of the population, in this part of the island of Leyte, remains very weak. Politics is perceived as the concern of the elite and family clans. Left organizations have no roots here. Perhaps the Communist Party has a dormant structure somewhere, but if this were the case, it is not visible. One must say that the process of building associations implemented by MiHands I is unknown to them. It promotes self-organization and the capacity of social movements to decide for themselves (instead of putting them under the command of the Party). It aims at genuinely improving the living conditions of its members and their communities (which the CP rejects a priori as reformist). It actually concerns the strengthening of representation and power of local popular organizations, based on objectives whose legitimacy is clearly understood because it deals with daily life.

The extent however is not limited to the village. The associations of the four barangays where MiHands operates regularly assess the situation together and profit from the experience of the coalition members accumulated in Mindanao. Through this, they also join regional initiatives and militant national networks (climate justice, struggle against poverty...)

After three years, their initial goal has been reached. Organizations have been formed, the number of members have grown. Many concrete projects have been initiated or are now being prepared. The usefulness of collective action is acknowledged. A second stage now opens, not devoid of traps. The three coming years will not be less crucial than the preceding ones.

Learn and act in solidarity

The policy of reconstruction targets a whole set of objectives. Resorting to organic family farming enables for example the diversification of crop production (rice, coconut, vegetables, peanuts, corn...) and avoids the monoculture of plantations (coconut, sugarcane) - and so strengthens the control by small producers of their economy. It is more resistant to climate hazards and easier to rehabilitate after a catastrophe. It is more healthy and reduces dependence on the market - it is the same with the use of medicinal herbs or acupuncture (when these methods are appropriate).



Local production of Blutangsi juice, blue tarnate extract, lemon grass leaves, and kalamansi (local lime) juice.

Bangkas, sakayan (long fishing boats with rafts) or carabaos (water buffalos, main plowing animal) are often for collective use, with each fisherman or peasant given his turn for their use.



New engines arrive in Bangkal. A welcome help as the fishing area is situated three kilometers offshore.

Self-managed microfinance enables one to avoid being under the control of money lenders. The seed money is generally provided by MiHands. The members of the association borrow the money to start their individual project (hog or fowl-raising for example). They return the loan after having sold their produce to reconstitute the totality of the working capital fund, while keeping the profit made.



Mutual aid mechanisms are also established: money is collected from members to protect households from risks of indebtedness. Funeral expenses can particularly be ruinous. One needs to take in and support all the extended family (and wait for those who work abroad). The wake lasts nine days before the burial.

To manage this mechanism of solidarity, very specific rules are defined beforehand: when a new member starts having rights, how often a household can be helped in case of illness and up to what amount...

Poor people helping other poor people cannot replace a public social security system. Unfortunately, they can only help each other up to a certain point. Without being revolutionary, new social relations emerge: a broader and more visible role of women; the modification of the relationship between the individual and the collectivity...



It has been some ten years now that ESSF engaged itself in solidarity activities towards victims of humanitarian catastrophes. Despite this, with each day that passed during my visit, I had the feeling that I was learning something new. I was also made to appreciate the quality of the work done, because nothing, really nothing is simple.

While the needs are so great, the hopes so urgent and the means so limited, how can one avoid individual conflicts from putting solidarity and collective functioning into danger?

How can one progress locally while the national situation is so unpredictable as no one really knows where the Duterte presidency is heading to?

Governmental action (under the previous Aquino administration) after super typhoon Haiyan is hacked with scandals. Funds have mysteriously disappeared. Clientelistic remunerations have been revealed at all levels. Non-habitable buildings were put up. Houses were constructed hurriedly, walls cracking, far from everything, without electricity, without running water, without drainage...

Last 6th and 7th November, a big conference took place in Leyte, initiated by the Community of Survivors of Yolanda and their partners [10]. It demanded from the new administration of President Rodrigo Duterte a thorough and general review of Aid policies - starting with the immediate suspension of a big coastal development project around Tacloban, which will result in the eviction of communities without any guarantee of relocation under conditions acceptable to the people.

In Ormoc, in Leyte and beyond, the combat of survivors continue. We need at this transitional moment to reaffirm our political solidarity with the victims of the super typhoon Yolanda, and revive our financial solidarity.

Pierre Rousset

A call for financial help

We do not receive any grants. The financial assistance we can provide depends entirely on the donations we receive.

To send donations

Cheques

cheques to ESSF in euros only, payable in France, to be sent to:

ESSF
2, rue Richard-Lenoir
93100 Montreuil
France

Bank Account:

Crédit lyonnais
Agence de la Croix-de-Chavaux (00525)
10 boulevard Chanzy
93100 Montreuil
France
ESSF, account number 445757C

International bank account details :

IBAN : FR85 3000 2005 2500 0044 5757 C12
BIC / SWIFT : CRLYFRPP
Account holder : ESSF

Through PayPal

You can send money through Paypal: see the PayPal button on the upper left side of ESSF home page [English version of Paypal form is on the English Home page].

Footnotes

[1] The strong winds being estimated at 230km/hr over 10 minutes and up to 315 km/hr over 1 minute

[2] The barangay (brgy. for short) is the smallest administrative unit - Governmental unit (GU) - in the Philippines

[3] Copra, dessicated coconut, from which various oil products are extracted

[4] Mindanao Humanitarian Action Network Against Disasters, recently became Multi-Stakeholders Initiatives for Humanitarian Action against Disasters

[5] Europe solidaire sans frontières. We have published numerous articles on this subject on our website. See the section particularly on the [Philippines \(ESSF\)](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?rubrique1480)
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?rubrique1480>

[6] See particularly on ESSF (article 30545), [Philippines Solidarity: Ormoc, Palompon, Villaba – the initial phase of relief operations is completed, the financial campaign continues:](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article30545)
<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article30545>

[7] It is in this island where the Moros - Muslims in the Philippines reside.

[8] Tambulilid Women's Organization, Tambulilid being a district in Ormoc where the habitants are, on the one hand, composed of displaced refugees after the catastrophe of 1991.

[9] United States Assistance for Internal Development.

[10] Community of Yolanda Survivors and Partners (CYSP), a new alliance formed by 163 local organizations and 9 NGOs