

# PHILIPPINES

## Renting vs Hosting Assistance in Post-Crisis Urban Areas



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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Country:** The Philippines

**Project location:** Tacloban City, Leyte

**Disaster:** Typhoon Haiyan

**Disaster date:** November 2013

**Project timescale:** December 2013 - December 2015

**Affected population:** 4.1 million people internally displaced

**Houses damaged:** 28,734 totally damaged houses, and 17,643 partially damaged in Tacloban city

**Target Population:** 3,000 households

**Project Budget (USD):** Approximately \$4,800,000

**Cost per household for renting:** \$ 1,600

**Cost per household for hosting:** \$1,600

**Donors:** The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and CRS private funds

**Partners:** City Housing Office, the Redemptorist Parish, Leyte Municipal Water District, Barangay authorities.

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## Background

On November 8, 2013, Category 5 Super Typhoon Haiyan made landfall in Eastern Samar province, Philippines. In Tacloban City alone, more than 28,500 shelters were destroyed and nearly 18,000 damaged. The resulting displacement was massive.

In the early days after the typhoon, the national government imposed a 40-meter buffer-zone along the coastline defined as a high-risk area. This strip was designated a 'No Dwell Zone' (NDZ). The government also revealed a plan to relocate the people who had lived in these areas. However, the people who used to live in these areas were living in makeshift shelters or with host families, and often in partially damaged or overcrowded accommodations where they were already beginning to reconstruct where possible, disregarding the theoretical NDZ.

Definitions from Sphere 2018 states:

**Host assistance:** People who are unable to return to their original homes often stay with family and friends, or communities with shared historical, religious or other ties. Supporting the host to continue to shelter affected people includes support to expand or adapt an existing host family shelter, or financial and material support for running costs.

**Rental assistance:** Assistance to affected households to rent accommodation and land can include financial contributions, support to obtain a fair agreement or advice on property standards. Rent is an ongoing expense, thus plan exit strategies, promoting self-sufficiency or connecting livelihood activities early.

## Renting vs hosting assistance in Tacloban, Philippines

Providing solutions for shelter in the aftermath of a disaster is essential for communities and the local government as they recover and return to normality. Transitional shelter solutions help communities meet **their** emergent needs, and can serve as the cornerstone for incremental developments as their circumstances change. However, for displaced families who completely lost their homes, such solutions require the challenging task of finding new locations to live in. And, in an urban setting, where land is scarce, relocation becomes even more challenging. During the typhoon response, beneficiary families were categorized by whether they had been living in the NDZ. For those that could not reconstruct in their previous location, because it was designated an NDZ, the renting and hosting program provided a menu of options, including:

1. Rent-to-own land subsidy
2. Land rental subsidy
3. Apartment rental
4. Host family subsidy

The last two options allowed the landlord or host to extend, upgrade or repair the house in which the family would stay.

The main goal of this effort was to provide affected families with adequate, safe and dignified transitional housing solutions, and set them on a pathway towards permanent, safe and durable homes. In doing so, CRS and its partners capitalized on the affected population's social capital by supporting families to find themselves suitable spaces. Efforts then helped them to relocate temporarily and plan next steps while the government developed a more permanent housing solution. The project also aimed to contribute to the empowerment of the local government authorities in their different roles.

## What did CRS and its Partners do?

CRS and its partners' support enabled the affected families to complete 3,297 shelters, including 1,104 repairs, 594 new constructions, 383 land rental, **1,573 apartment rentals, and 384 host families.**

Besides the trainings for the affected populations, CRS conducted trainings to apartment owners and renters, with a focus on 'The Rights and Obligations of Lessors and Lessees in the Philippines in Accordance with Existing Laws.' This was done by the project's community organizers and paralegal officers.

## Delivery Mechanism

The first step was to inform people about the details and timeline of the government's long-term project and CRS's transitional shelter support.

Once families were aware of those two timelines, CRS held consultations with the targeted population to help them design adequate options. **Two options were specifically designed for families from the NDZ who did not want to move to transitional relocation sites; apartment rentals and host family subsidies.** These stemmed from a desire to maintain their livelihood sources or social networks.

The project placed the responsibility on each household to find an apartment or host family to which they would be happy to relocate. **For both options, program participants were offered equal subsidies of \$1,600 to cover two years worth of costs, and encouraged to negotiate the price and keep any difference.**

Once a family had found a housing option that suited them, the project engineers conducted a technical assessment to ensure that it met Sphere standards. They also identified repairs or extensions that were necessary, and made the bill of quantities for the parties involved. Next, contract negotiations began between the family and the host or apartment owner.

## The Contracts

- For the apartment rental option, a lump sum of the negotiated rent price was transferred to the apartment owner upon signing the two-year rental contract. The apartment owners were responsible for making the repairs stipulated in the contract before the family moved in.
- In the case of the host family option, the contract stipulated that the host was eligible to receive the first tranche (up to \$800) to repair or extend their house so that it could accommodate both families. The second tranche was transferred to the family being hosted to contribute to household expenses, such as utilities or food.

CRS ensured that the contracts were notarized with a lawyer. The contract included attachments with clauses pertaining to protection issues and gender-based violence. This was supported by orientations about the rights and responsibilities of each party.

## Sustainability

CRS supported beneficiary families in their applications for permanent government housing. Besides training on hazard-resistant techniques, CRS also conducted trainings on disaster preparedness so that people knew how to prepare for and evacuate ahead of future typhoons.



Alejandro Simbajon Sr. and his wife, Nenita, with their grandson and great grandchildren at their residence in Greenville, Marasbaras where renovations are ongoing. At the back (L-R), Paz, Vilma, Alicia and Marlyn, are beneficiaries of CRS Host Family option.

Photo: CRS

CRS always worked closely with the government to reinforce its role to provide permanent housing units at the end of the project.

## Protection

Each barangay has a "Peace and Order Council" headed by its captain. Beneficiaries were encouraged to seek resolutions to conflicts through this recognized structure. This was part of the orientation given to all parties prior to release of the assistance. This was applicable should conflict arise between beneficiaries and the apartment owners, or even with their host-relatives.

There was also an initial collaboration with the "Department of Social Welfare and Development" to follow up on any reported case.

## Beneficiary Selection

The project used a blanket-coverage targeting approach. It supported all families whose shelters were damaged or destroyed and lived in the targeted barangays in Tacloban City. The barangays were selected in consultation with other humanitarian actors and the local government to avoid duplication and overlap. All beneficiary families had the opportunity to choose the option that would suit their individual needs, assisted by CRS.

## Learnings

1. Shifting the responsibility to the households increases satisfaction by families, and benefits from their existing social capital and local knowledge to locate suitable, safe housing options.
2. Non-physical concepts and boundaries such as the 'No Dwell Zone' can create uncertainties that need to be negotiated early with the authorities. This will speed-up the delivery of assistance and ensure transparency while communicating with the affected population.
3. Establish and communicate to potential landlords and host a strong legal framework that guarantees their rights and indicates the tenants' responsibilities. This increases transparency and limits conflicts.
4. Allow beneficiaries to receive the difference between any negotiated price and the grant amount in cash, using a "Keep the Change" approach, thereby preventing market rent price from inflation.



Rosa and her daughters and granddaughters are in the bedroom of their safer apartment. Photo: CRS

## DRR components

CRS and partners worked with communities to provide drainage, sewage channels and other essential infrastructure. This was to ensure the protection of both the people living on the land as well as the land itself.

CRS also supported the construction of on-site transitional shelters using a reinforced concrete foundation, enabling the shelter to be securely anchored, preventing it from being upturned by flood or strong winds.

The design featured a raised floor to provide ventilation as well as protection from floods and vermin.

HOSTING	VS	RENTING
WHY?		
Availability of relatives to be hosted with. Already hosted by a family and wish to compensate them.		No relatives to be hosted with. More freedom to choose where to live. Seeking privacy.
WHERE?		
Bound by the location of the hosting relatives.		Close to the original location and livelihood sources.
FUTURE PLANS?		
Plan A: Government housing. Plan B: Extension of the current situation or returning to the original location.		
LOCATION EFFECT?		
Increased transportation costs (to reach livelihood sources and schools).		No increase in transportation costs (close to livelihood sources or schools).
INCLUSION?		
A sense of acceptance and inclusion		
CONTRACTS?		
Fair and beneficial to both parties.		
CONFLICTS?		
Minor conflicts.		No conflicts.

## Success Story

Rosa Buanhog, 55, lived in the NDZ of Barangay 60, Tacloban City. Before Typhoon Haiyan struck, she and her family chose not to evacuate because they had anticipated that it would be an ordinary typhoon. They also did not comprehend the meaning of the term "storm surge," so readied themselves in the same way as previous typhoons. But, this time it was different.

When the waters surged, Rosa was separated from her family. Neighbors were able to help rescue some of them, climbing onto the roof of a nearby building. But, one of Rosa's daughters and two grandsons were lost in the waters.

As she picked up the pieces to her life, Rosa attended a CRS meeting to learn more about the "Menu of Options" for safe transitional and permanent homes. After weighing the different options, Rosa and her extended family decided to rent an apartment. The owner of the apartment they found is a family friend who readily accommodated them. They were able to negotiate a monthly rental of \$45 and, because of the "keep the change" policy, Rosa was able to use the savings to invest in her livelihood as well as their ongoing daily household expenses. Rosa's daughter, Rose Marie, was able to buy a pedicab that her husband now drives daily for a steady income.

The apartment Rosa rented is more than what she expected: it is well-ventilated, spacious and has allowed the family to become closer. Located 3 kilometers from their original barangay, Rosa prefers the location of her new home. She no longer worries about upcoming typhoons because she knows that her home is in a safe place. She also feels at home given the kindness of the owner. Rosa says she now has peace of mind, far from the sea.