



Bidlisiw Foundation Inc.



Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the outcome evaluation study for the project titled, **Child Protection Support to Children and Families Affected by Typhoon Rai**, implemented by Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL), together with its implementing partners, Bidlisiw Foundation, Inc., and the Center for Empowerment and Development of People's Organizations in Eastern Visayas (CoPE). The project was implemented from May to December 2022, with the overall goal of ensuring that children in disaster-affected communities in Cebu Province and Borongan City, Eastern Samar, are protected from child abuse and exploitation.

The evaluation was conducted from January 6 to February 28, 2023. It examined the extent to which the project objectives have been achieved, determined the extent to which the project has had positive impact and benefits among the partner-beneficiaries, including unintended ones, examined factors about the project design and implementation that can be replicated or improved, and came up with key lessons and recommendations for future programming.

The evaluation study was predominantly qualitative. It has reached a total of 108 project stakeholders (33 from Borongan City, and 74 from Cebu Province) through key informant interviews and focus group discussions among project stakeholders, which include representatives from TdH NL and Implementing Partners (6), children 6-12 years old (26), children 13-17 years (14), barangay and city governments (18), community volunteers (10), youth volunteers and facilitators (17), and parents (17). Twenty eight percent (28%) of the total respondents are males, while 72% are females. Among the child respondents, 42.5% are males and 57.5% are females. Of the 108 project participants, 3 identified themselves as persons with disabilities.

Compared to the project reach, the scope of the evaluation is limited. This is mainly influenced by the limitations in timeframe and resources which limited the evaluation's potential to reach more areas and project participants. Similarly, factors such as availability of data, scheduling conflicts, and language barrier presented a challenge during the evaluation.

KEY FINDINGS

The evaluation revealed that the project was able to contribute to the overall goal of **protecting children in disaster-affected and disaster-prone areas in Cebu and Eastern Samar**, from abuse and exploitation. By focusing on Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE) through mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), the project helped in addressing some of the gaps in humanitarian action, that put children at greater risk to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence, which include the exclusion of children, and their specific needs in response programming and implementation and their lack of access to fundamental protective services, including MHPSS.

The project was also able to mobilize community-level and local government support that helped strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms and promote the development of rights-based policies and programs for children and young people, within and outside the context of emergencies.

The **shelter assistance**, and the **trainings and rollout on MHPSS** were considered most essential as they did not only address the immediate needs of children and their families, but also helped in preventing future risks. The ongoing efforts of barangay local government units (BLGUs) were augmented, and more enabling institutional mechanisms were developed for rights-based and community-based child protection programming.

Supported by effective strategies and interventions, the project was able to meet the majority of its desired results, and even exceeded some targets at the output level. **1060 children and 480 parents were reached by the project during the MHPSS rollout.** For the shelter assistance, 303 families across Cebu benefitted from shelter repair materials and solar lamps provided by the project, exceeding the target of 285. Meanwhile, the two policy development targets for the City of Borongan- the Children's Code amendment and the development of the Comprehensive Emergency Plan for Children- have already been submitted to the City Legislative Council since October 2022 and undergoing review and deliberation and pending approval.



At the outcome level, the **MHPSS sessions contributed to increasing the capacity of children to cope with distress**, caused not only by the impacts of Super Typhoon Rai, but by other factors such as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, school pressures, and domestic issues. They learned about children's rights, child protection issues, case reporting mechanisms, and exercises and techniques to help them deal with their stressors. The provision of shelter assistance and solar lamps was a great relief for parents and caregivers. These alleviated the cost for shelter repair and supported them in providing protection and restoring safety and stability for their children. While the assistance itself was not adequate for some to fully recover and completely rebuild their houses, they are still grateful and have become more hopeful moving forward. In Borongan City, the MHPSS sessions attended by mothers and fathers in the community helped in reducing parental distress caused by COVID-19, and day-to-day problems. This also led to some improvements in their relationship within the family, and improvement in the way they support their children.

On the part of duty-bearers, the **training on CPIE paved the way for some reflections and change in perspectives** on how children's needs are being prioritized by the BLGUs during emergencies. The project also increased public awareness on mental health and case referral systems, which encouraged better reporting of child protection and MHPSS cases among children and adults. During the project implementation, 32 cases involving children were referred for specialized mental health and other specific support, while there were 3 among parents. In Borongan City, children and youth were also given the opportunity to engage in

child-led initiatives through advocacy campaigns. Policy advocacy and campaigns also enabled duty-bearers to take on a more active role in promoting children's rights and MHPSS, and mainstreaming them in their plans, budget, and legislation.

In terms of efficiency, the project resources are considered adequate, and well-managed to meet the desired results. Despite some challenges encountered during the implementation, it did not hamper the completion of activities within the project timeframe and budget. Effective strategies were also employed by partners to optimize resources and reach even more project participants than targeted.

There are also some **gains** from the project in terms of **ensuring child participation and gender mainstreaming**. Children were consulted as early as the post-disaster needs assessment phase, and during the project activities. They played a crucial role as facilitators in the implementation of the MHPSS sessions and were also part of the project evaluation. On the other hand, aside from gender data disaggregation, intentional efforts were also done to include women and men in the activities and ensure gender diversity in activities. Meanwhile, disability inclusion is a recognized area for improvement of the project.

In a short time, the **project resulted in some positive changes among the project stakeholders**, which can serve as foundation for the sustainability of community-based efforts on CPIE through MHPSS in the project areas. At the individual level, the project led to an increase in public awareness on mental health and CPIE. There is a realization on the part of some duty-bearers about their accountability to prioritize child-centered programs, while there is better opportunity created at the level of community to accept and participate in such programs. The involvement of children and youth as participants, volunteers, and advocates during the MHPSS rollout gave them the opportunity to develop their skills and potentials, and gain greater social awareness, which propel their desire to take on a more active role in their communities. This can set the stage for more meaningful civic engagement for young people and children and youth-led initiatives.

Lastly, in Borongan City, the project has had far-reaching results in terms of mainstreaming CPIE in the LGU plans and policies. The project paved the way for the enactment of the Borongan City Mental Health Program of 2022 (City Ordinance No. 244), a significant milestone that can help sustain the gains of CPIE efforts through MHPSS. The MHPSS facilitators will also have the potential to serve as Psychological First Aid (PFA) teams and help make MHPSS more accessible to the community, including children, during disasters and emergencies.

The potential for sustainability for some of the gains and outcomes of the project is high. Due to **TdH NL's approach of partnering with local organizations such as Bidlisiw Foundation and CoPE**, the potential for the latter to continue supporting the same communities for similar or new interventions, whether still supported by TdH NL or not, is high. Learning from the experience of CoPE in Borongan City, policy advocacy has a huge role in sustainability. The institutionalization of community-based MHPSS and the pending approval of the amended Children's Code and Comprehensive Emergency Plan for Children (CECP) of Borongan City are concrete mechanisms that can sustain the outcomes and benefits of the project beyond its project life. Being able to develop the capacities of community volunteers, parents, and children and youth can also contribute to sustainability efforts for the project. Their capacities can be honed continuously, and more opportunities may be created for them to continue to play an active role in awareness raising, and advocacy efforts in their communities.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Leveraging on the gains and lessons from the project implementation, and recognizing their potential for sustainability, the next section presents programmatic recommendations that TdH NL, Bidlisiw Foundation, CoPE, and their partners can consider for future programming, in order for similar interventions to contribute more not only in protecting at-risk children from abuse and exploitation, but also in further strengthening child protection systems and services that will enable children to better access better opportunities to participate meaningfully in society and pursue their full development potential.



Strengthen Child Protection in Emergencies through Disaster Risk Reduction



Strengthen Disability Inclusion Mechanisms



Scale up Community-based MHPSS



Inclusion of Livelihood Support

Recommendations on Project Management

Aside from the abovementioned programmatic or intervention-level recommendations, recommendations are also offered through the evaluation pertaining to improving the management and monitoring of future and similar projects. These recommendations include:

1. Streamlining of Organizational Workflow and Administrative Procedures to Adapt to Emergency Context

The streamlining of TdH NL in the Philippines' organizational workflow and administrative procedures is recommended to help address existing and potential barriers to rapid response to crises. Some areas of work that may be considered for this process include disaster information management and communication, resource allocation and funding, partnership and coordination, needs assessment and planning, and standby arrangements and pre-positioning of emergency services.

2. Establishment of Emergency Response Fund

The implementation of the response project affirmed the importance of having available and dedicated funds for disaster response in TdH NL's covered areas, especially that most ongoing projects often have restricted funding. One recommendation from the evaluation is for TdH NL in the Philippines to establish an emergency response fund as a form of risk financing mechanism, that will help it ensure that adequate funds are available to meet its financial needs should a disaster occur in its areas of operation in the country.

3. Improvement in Project Performance Monitoring and Reporting

The timeliness and completeness of the submitted reports by partners was considered as one of the areas for improvement for project management.

To help address this, structures such as the Project Management Team formed for the project need to be maximized for leveling off on reporting requirements, project progress monitoring, and capacities sharing, including in ensuring that documentation requirements for the projects are adequate.

