

# Durable solutions for people displaced by Typhoon Haiyan in Tacloban, Philippines



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## Key messages

- Disaster-induced displacement has long-term impacts on lives and livelihoods of affected people; durable solutions are needed to ensure the fulfilment of human rights and development needs of displaced people beyond disaster recovery period.
- The planning and implementation of durable solutions must take into account how displacement intersects with other drivers of vulnerability, such as sex, location and socio-economic status.
- Laws and legislation related to disaster risk reduction and internally displaced persons must adopt a human rights-based approach to protect the rights of displaced people and hold duty-bearers accountable.

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## Introduction

In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, one of the most powerful tropical storms ever recorded, displaced over four million people in the Philippines. To understand the long-term impacts of displacement from this disaster, SEI and the Philippines' national-level independent Commission on Human Rights (CHR) began research in 2020 on the development implications of disaster displacement and durable solutions. This research assesses the impacts of displacement on quality of life and human rights in resettlement villages in Tacloban, a city in Region VIII that was hit the hardest by Haiyan.

The study aims to inform legislative and policy processes related to human rights, development, transformative disaster risk reduction, long-term disaster recovery, durable solutions and internal displacement in the Philippines. The findings presented here are the first results from this study, which will be published in whole as a separate report.

Human rights are often compromised for people who become displaced in the wake of disasters. As climate change increases the impact of disasters, protecting displaced persons' human rights will become even more challenging – particularly in the Philippines, which had the highest number of new disaster displacements in the world last year (IDMC, 2020, 2021). The Philippines, however, has no national policy or law specific to the rights of internally displaced persons, despite recent efforts. Responses to displacement are guided by international humanitarian standards and guidelines.

IMAGE (ABOVE): Typhoon Haiyan  
devastates the Philippines

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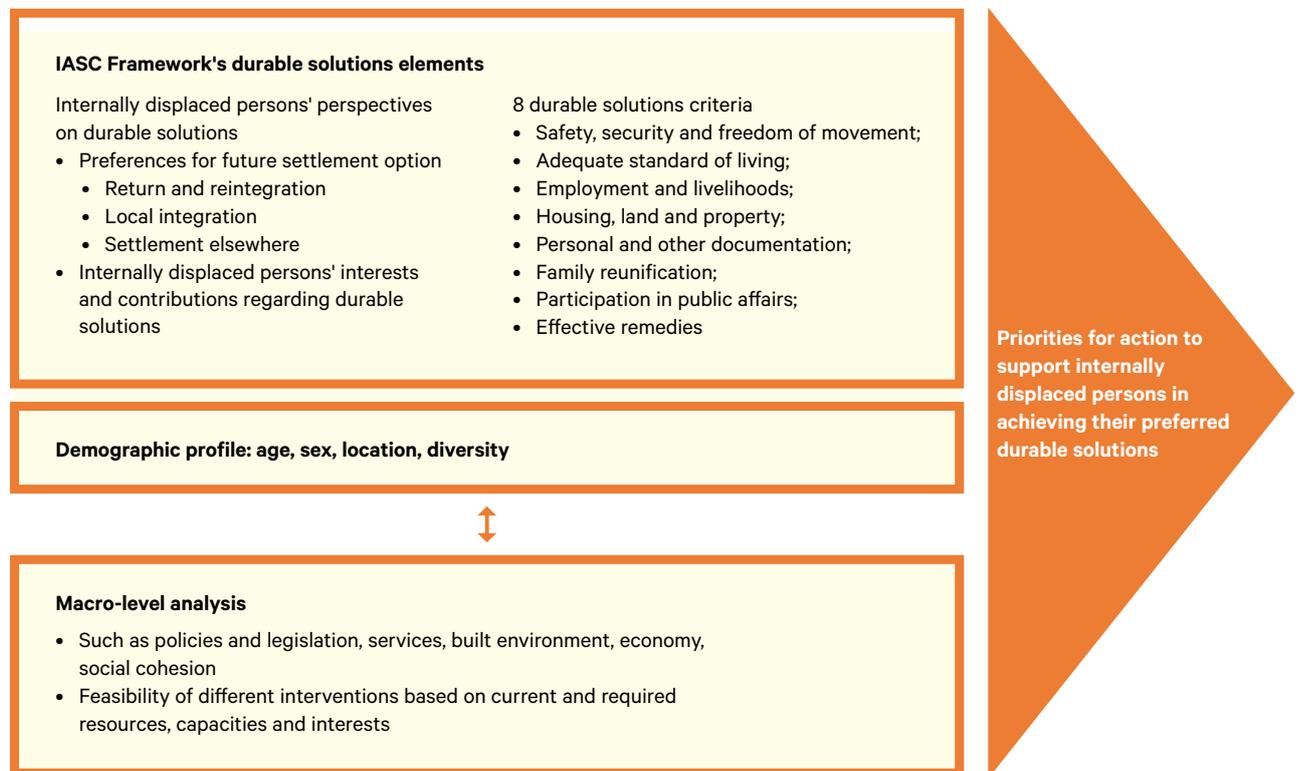
We acknowledge the limits of our chosen approach, including the lack of internally displaced persons' engagement in the research design, and limitations of the survey instrument, including its inability to gather in-depth, nuanced insights. Given the urgent need for long-term understanding of disaster-induced displacement and its impacts on human rights, we see the survey as a fit tool to capture an overview of the state of human rights among internally displaced persons, while acknowledging that further knowledge co-produced with the people themselves is needed to better understand the displacement and development question.

This summary brief presents key findings analysed according to the Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, created in 2010 by the UN-established Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). According to the IASC Framework, durable solutions are achieved when displaced people no longer have “assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement”. The Framework includes eight human rights-based principles to guide the search for durable solutions, which can be achieved when people return home, integrate locally or resettle elsewhere (see Figure 2 for a durable-solutions analytical framework).

## Durable solutions in resettlement sites in Tacloban

Nearly a decade after Typhoon Haiyan, the eight durable solutions criteria set out by the IASC Framework have not been achieved (Figure 2). This section summarizes the survey results on the state of six out of the eight durable solutions criteria. The two Framework criteria that are not included in this study are access to documentation and family reunification.

Figure 2. Durable solutions analytical framework



Source: Kivelä et al. (2018)

**Safety, security and freedom of movement:** Whether in Villa Diana, North Hill Arbour, Pope Francis Village or Habitat for Humanity, residents feel safer than before they were displaced. They report their sense of safety is attached to lower risks from flood and water-related hazards, as the resettlement sites are no longer close to the sea. Residents also have higher-quality housing, particularly those who used to live in informal, precarious structures before the typhoon. Among the quality-of-life indicators, participants give safety the highest level of satisfaction, averaging 4 on a 1-5 scale (Figure 3).

Concerns about crimes and insecurity persist, however, especially for those who end up in a resettlement site with people formerly from different barangays or neighbourhoods. As one resident shared, “crimes are inevitable because residents came from different barangays”. Feelings of safety thus also depend on familiarity with the immediate neighbourhood and neighbours.

Figure 3. Average rating of substantive rights by settlement type (housing sponsored by the National Housing Authority, NHA, and non-governmental organizations, NGO) on a 1-5 scale. Two-tailed t-test indicates statistical significance of the difference (\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.0001).

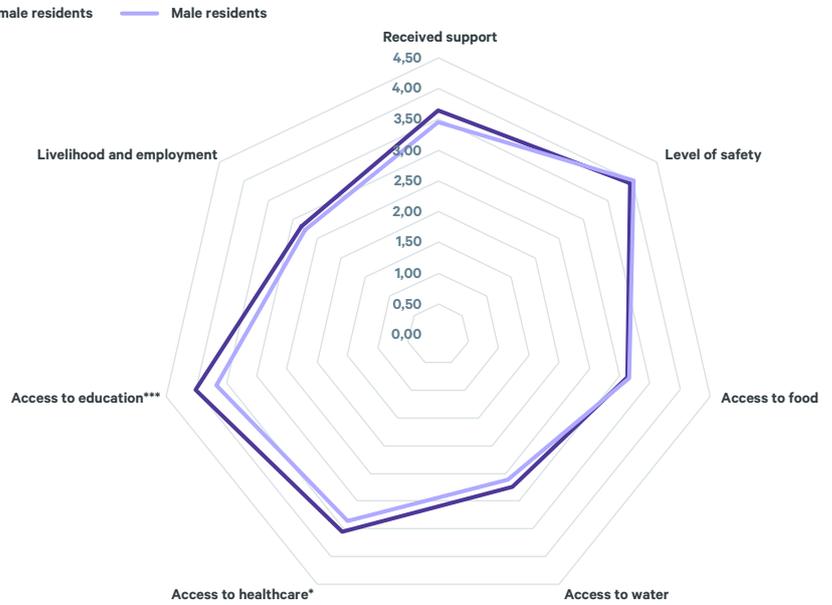


**Adequate standard of living:** Durable solutions have not been achieved regarding access to water and security of tenure. While residents suggested that they now “live with dignity” and in permanent housing, many do not feel secure about their tenure. Those living in housing by the National Housing Authority are less likely to have a rental or ownership paperwork for their housing unit. They also pointed out that getting access to consistent, safe and affordable water sources is one of their biggest challenges.

Relative to the water and tenure security concerns, access to food, education and health services is perceived to be better, and this is not the priority concern for survey respondents. Differences in access to basic services exist among residents in resettlement sites run by the National Housing Authority or by non-governmental organizations (Figure 3). Differences also occur between genders as self-reported in the survey (Figures 4). Residents in housing developed by the National Housing Authority reported significantly better access to education but less access to

healthcare and water, compared to those living in non-governmental housing. Female respondents also reported significantly better education and healthcare access than male respondents.

Figure 4. Average rating of substantive rights by respondents' gender on a 1-5 scale. Two-tailed t-test indicates statistical significance of the difference (\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.0001).



**Employment and livelihood:** Employment and livelihood remain challenging for displaced households. Many people find themselves worse off after resettlement, reporting difficulty finding and travelling to a job and not making ends meet. Assessing their own livelihoods and employment after the typhoon, residents of National Housing Authority resettlement sites scored their conditions significantly higher than their counterparts in non-governmental-run sites. No significant difference was indicated between male and female respondents. One of the key factors influencing livelihood opportunities is the remote location of the resettlement site, making it time-consuming and costly for residents to travel around and find jobs, as well as to access other goods and services.

**Housing, land and property:** For residents of the four resettlement sites, tenure security remains a concern (Figure 5). Many residents, including former homeowners, said they are “unsure” about their land titles and rights. Others are worried about having to pay for their housing or being evicted in the future.

While most participants' houses suffered major damages and were uninhabitable after the typhoon, less than 40% of these participants have been compensated, of whom over 60% are female. While 93% of female respondents described their housing as permanent and 46% have housing paperwork (Figure 6), only 82% and 31% of male respondents do, respectively. Furthermore, more male respondents felt unsure of their housing status than females.

Figure 5. Survey respondents with rental or ownership paperwork by settlement type

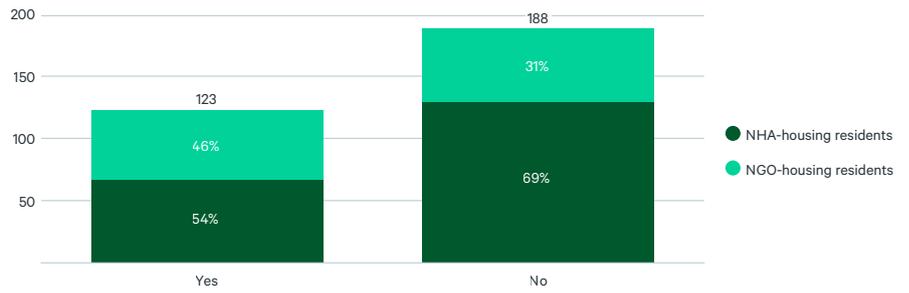
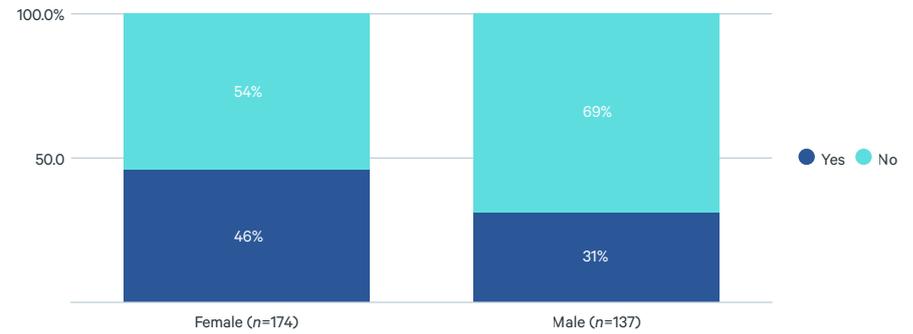
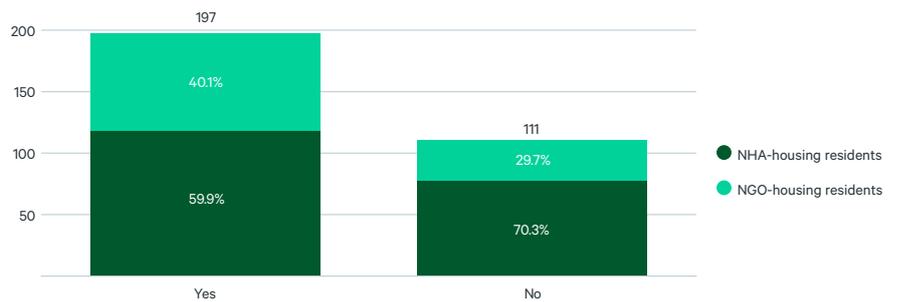


Figure 6. Survey respondents with rental or ownership paperwork by gender



Participants find the availability and distribution of disaster relief to be unfair and inequitable, and the majority who find it unfair are residents of the National Housing Authority’s housing sites (Figure 7). Many report not being consulted or given the opportunity to participate in resettlement and recovery planning and decision-making processes.

Figure 7. Survey respondents on the fairness of post-disaster assistance distribution by settlement type



**Participation in public affairs:** While the majority of residents shared that they have participated in decision-making through attending meetings with homeowner associations or cluster organizations, they still face challenges in engaging with their new communities and having their voices heard. Some are hesitant to share opinions with neighbours who resettled from different *barangays*, fearing their ideas may “offend” others or lead to conflict. Participation in public affairs is thus constrained by residents’ sense of community and social cohesion.

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## Summary and recommendations

The persistence of human rights issues for people affected by Typhoon Haiyan demonstrates the importance of planning and management in disaster recovery that take into account human rights and development needs over the long-term. The search for and implementation of durable solutions should strive to enable social equity, ensure internally displaced people have decision-making power, and drive community empowerment. The process should also acknowledge and account for the fact that displacement is just one factor of vulnerability, which intersects with people's gender identity, socio-economic status, and other characteristics to create unique vulnerability profiles in displacement contexts.

The human rights issues surrounding prolonged displacement in Tacloban City have raised governance concerns, particularly in the distribution of basic relief support and livelihoods, provision of land tenure, and conduct of public life. Recommendations for improving the situation of prolonged displacement in the city include the following:

**1. Include displaced people in the process of determining durable solutions.** The voices, knowledge and lived experiences of people in displaced communities are important in the achievement of durable solutions. Displaced individuals' participation in crafting master lists, distributing goods, and determining areas and arrangements for resettlement or relocation is critical to ensure not only their rights to participation but also the effectiveness of these activities. The Covid-19 pandemic renders most of these activities even more challenging; community participation in public health programmes and health screening thus must also be protected and ensured.

**2. Improve the titling and land tenure system to ensure security of ownership for the recipients of permanent housing.** Land titles must be secured for housing beneficiaries from the start of the awarding of units, and the post-titling process should include social preparations for housing beneficiaries on the legal implications of their land ownership.

**3. Provide holistic social preparation and engagement for community integration of displaced people who choose to reside in their places of resettlement.** The resettled communities and the host communities must be given the chance to build good relations and integrate for social cohesion. The local government, particularly at the barangay level, and local organizations can assist in strengthening community relations through engagement of resettled communities in local activities. The local government also should prepare host communities to support the integration of the resettled communities into their area, for example by involving host communities early in the resettlement decision-making processes and attending to their concerns and needs.

**4. Provide clear guidelines from and feedback mechanisms to the local government and regional agencies on the provision of access to basic services.** The lack of clear guidelines on the provision of basic services impacts the condition of living of affected families, particularly financially. The city government must provide clear information in all aspects of public life and governance.

Mechanisms for feedback must also be in place in view of local laws promoting government transparency. They must be designed with appropriate structures and staffing to ensure responsiveness to complaints and requests, coupled with measures to strengthen communities' trust and confidence in the system.

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**5. Revise Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Law to include a human rights-based approach, particularly in relation to disaster displacement.** The DRRM Law is the current legal framework for the conduct of humanitarian protection and response; it is important that human rights language and an accountability mechanism be included in its provisions. The DRRM Law should also outline thorough and comprehensive planning processes to identify resettlement timelines, resources and risk, to come up with a roadmap that runs from the emergency phase, through the transition phase, to durable solutions.

**6. Pass human rights-based legislation for internally displaced peoples' protection.**

Human rights-based legislation or policy addressing displacement at the national and local levels (i.e. barangay, municipality, city and province) could provide the framework for an inclusive, participatory and more accountable humanitarian response. Such legislation could also provide clearer guidance to government agencies and instruments for the provision of basic services for internally displaced persons; such legal mechanisms could bring issues of displacement into the mainstream in various offices and to establish their mandates in humanitarian response, and could improve accountability mechanisms particularly for duty-bearers.

Government plays a crucial role in upholding internally displaced peoples' rights. National legislation protecting such rights, and penalizing breaches thereof, would help in setting up a structure of accountability in which the national government of the Philippines would take the primary role of protecting persons in displacement contexts.

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