

WOMEN FISHERS WEATHERING YOLANDA: HERSTORIES OF BUILDING RESILIENCE IN TIMES OF NATURAL DISASTERS

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When Super typhoon Yolanda (aka *Haiyan*) left Leyte and Samar, two of the worst-hit provinces in the Philippines, the destruction and damages to lives, livelihoods and properties were unimaginable and incomprehensible, particularly to the women fishers and their households who were most vulnerable to the storm surge. Less than a year hence today, the women fishers have generally bounced back. Given a little more time, recovery and rehabilitation initiatives are expected to get women fishers to a better state.

How did women fishers respond to the negative impacts of Yolanda? How did they survive and keep their families healthy and safe amid lost livelihoods, totally damaged houses, and a sorry state of public service delivery especially during the rescue and relief phases after that fateful day on the 8th of November 2013? How did they prepare for Yolanda such that the negative effects of the disaster were kept to a minimum as possible? This paper attempted to answer these questions from which are drawn the elements of a disaster resilience agenda for women fishers, based on the experiences of Yolanda women fisher-survivors. The discussion on the agenda, however, is limited to the adaptive capacity of the women fishers' households in as far as building resilience is concerned.

Focus group discussions, and key informant interviews were conducted among selected women fishers from three coastal barangays along the Leyte Gulf. Herstories on how the women fishers were able to build resilience before, during and after the disaster were noted. These were juxtaposed within adaptive capacity models which are being used by various development and humanitarian international organizations. Common to these models is the description of the adaptive capacity of a vulnerable group (such as the women fishers) to shocks such as a storm surge along the following areas: information and knowledge, human and natural asset base, innovation, and leadership and governance. Constraints and facilitators in building back better and quicker were further looked into, as crucial inputs in drawing up the agenda for building the resilience of women fishers to a storm surge like Yolanda.