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Typhoon Haiyan One Year On: Disability, Poverty and Participation in the Philippines

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This article explores the relationship between disability, poverty and participation in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Haiyan, which struck the Philippines on 8th November 2013, based on field research conducted at the time of Haiyan's first anniversary. Fieldwork included interviews exploring disabled people's experiences, their priorities and the challenges facing them in the year since Haiyan. The analysis, which draws on a three-level typology of participation and Sen's (1999) capability perspective, concludes that disabled people have the potential to participate as active agents in disaster planning and recovery processes, both individually and collectively, at various levels. Furthermore, supporting disabled people to participate effectively, through flexible approaches, capacity building and the forging of pro-poor alliances, can reduce poverty in capability terms, as well as raising awareness of the largely untapped potential of disabled people to contribute to the shaping of more inclusive societies.

Keywords: disability; poverty; participation; capability; disasters.

Introduction

Super Typhoon Haiyan (known locally as Yolanda), the strongest typhoon on record ever to make landfall, swept across the heavily populated central Philippine provinces on 8th November 2013, leaving a trail of death, devastation and shattered lives in its wake. According to official sources (NDRRMC, 2014a), over 6000 lives were lost, over four million people were displaced and over 16 million people were affected by the destruction of infrastructure and breakdown of basic services across 44 provinces. For the Philippines, a country once described by its former president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as a 'laboratory of major disasters' (NDCC, 2009:i), this was a natural disaster without precedent in terms of scale and impact.

One year on, at the time of my research visit to the Philippines, many people were still struggling to cope with the catastrophic consequences of Haiyan. Oxfam (2014), one of numerous Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) still involved in relief and recovery operations, estimated that nearly half a million people were still living in emergency or

makeshift shelters at this time, often located in hazardous ‘no-build’ areas close to the shoreline, while still awaiting the allocation of land for permanent resettlement. Many people had yet to re-establish their livelihoods, following the loss of vital assets, such as fishing boats, and the prospect of resettlement was only adding to uncertainties around their future livelihoods. The precarious existence of those living in low-lying areas vulnerable to storms was highlighted when another powerful tropical cyclone, Typhoon Hagupit, struck on 6th December 2014, just a week after my visit, causing considerable damage to the same coastal settlements on the Eastern coast that had previously been decimated by Haiyan. Thankfully, however, there were no accompanying tidal waves this time round and the vulnerable areas were almost totally evacuated, as widely reported by international news media at the time. The impact in terms of casualties was also significantly reduced, in comparison to Haiyan, with Government sources reporting 18 deaths and 916 injuries (NDRRMC, 2014b).

While the proportion of disabled people among those affected by Haiyan is unknown, it is widely recognised that disabled people are disproportionately affected by disasters (Smith et al., 2012). This is particularly the case in low-income settings, where high levels of poverty, limited resources and a lack of welfare benefits often combine to reinforce disabled people’s vulnerability (IFRC, 2007). It can also be argued that disabled people are more likely to experience natural disasters as human disasters (Priestley and Hemmingway, 2007), especially in low-income settings, due to their disproportionate representation among the poor and their own underlying vulnerabilities, arising from factors such as stigma, inaccessible infrastructure and a lack of accurate data on their whereabouts and needs. When mass displacement occurs, as in the case of Haiyan, these issues can be magnified. The rights and particular needs of disabled people that are forced to migrate are often ignored, while others may simply be left behind, often with reduced family and community support and increased vulnerability to poverty (Pisani and Grech, 2015).

This research study was conducted on behalf of the International Development Department at the University of Birmingham, where a new postgraduate module on ‘disability and development’ has recently been introduced, reflecting the rising profile of disability as an important topic in the field of international development. A search for literature on disability in the Philippines revealed very few studies that have taken account of the views and experiences of disabled people themselves, with those that have tending to be based on mainly quantitative analyses of responses to highly structured surveys (see for example, Reyes et al., 2011). Recognising this apparent knowledge gap, this study draws heavily on in-depth semi-structured interviews with disabled people, most of whom were living in or around Tacloban, a city which bore the brunt of Haiyan’s devastating impact. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain rich and detailed descriptions of the lived experiences of disabled people in the year that had elapsed since the disaster, to determine the extent to which they had been able to actively participate in relief operations and longer-term recovery programmes, and to learn about their current priorities and future hopes. The study focus on

participation reflects calls for more disability-inclusive approaches to disaster planning and recovery (see for example Smith et al., 2012; Kett, 2010; Priestley and Hemmingway, 2007), which are also increasingly reflected in international policy frameworks, particularly within the Asia Pacific region. This article draws on the study findings to reflect on the relationship between disability, poverty and participation in the Philippines context, making use of a three-level typology of participation (HI, 2014) and Sen's (1999) capability approach.

Disability, poverty and participation

Disability is a widely contested concept, with definitional variations both within and between countries. Perhaps the most authoritative definition, however, is contained within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which views disability in terms of participation restrictions that arise from 'the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers' (UN, 2006), thus reflecting a paradigm shift from disability viewed as a medical problem to disability viewed as a social problem (Meekosha and Soldatic, 2011). This paper uses the term 'disabled people', rather than 'persons with disabilities', recognising that disability arises through discriminatory processes within society (Oliver, 1990). However, the role of impairment itself as a contributory factor should not be ignored, particularly in the context of the global South, where impairment often arises from preventable factors, such as conflict, malnutrition and disease (Singal, 2010). Disability can thus be viewed as a multi-dimensional concept, as reflected in the WHO's (2001) International Classification of Functioning (ICF) model, which recognises that a range of medical, biological, psychological and environmental factors (including societal barriers) combine to create and reinforce disability.

Poverty is also now widely recognised as a multi-dimensional concept, extending beyond lack of income and savings to encompass 'a cruel mix of human deprivation in knowledge, health, dignity and rights, obstacles to participation and lack of voice' (UNDP, 2013:1). Poverty can also be viewed in terms of Sen's (1999:18) capability perspective, where capabilities are defined as 'the freedom to do the things one has reason to value'. Within this perspective, poverty is viewed as a lack of capability to attain the desired outcomes (or 'substantive freedoms', using Sen's terminology) which together constitute an acceptable standard of living. These desired outcomes are determined by individual priorities, which implies that the nature of poverty may vary from person to person, and can only really be fully understood by giving voice to the poor. The capability perspective shifts the focus from the assets and resources that people have in the present to the opportunities available to them to convert these assets and resources into desired outcomes, or 'freedoms'. Many disabled people lack such opportunities, due to the physical, attitudinal and systemic barriers (WHO and World Bank, 2011) which limit their participation in society. Moreover, Sen (2004) has also observed that disabled people are at a particular disadvantage, when compared with non-

disabled people, due to a ‘conversion handicap’, which relates to the extra costs faced by disabled people in converting a given level of income into desired outcomes, however these are defined.

Participation is yet another contested concept, with understandings of the term varying from one context to another. In the development context, types of participation may range from the physical contribution of project beneficiaries towards the achievement of project outcomes to organized efforts to increase control of hitherto excluded groups and individuals over resources and institutions (Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994). Handicap International (HI, 2014) presents a useful three-level typology of participation, which distinguishes between the participation of disabled people:

- in decisions affecting their individual lives
- as representatives of users of services
- to influence decision-making processes

While the concepts of disability, poverty and participation can be interpreted in various ways, they are also intimately related. It is widely recognised that disabled people are disproportionately represented among the poor (WHO and World Bank, 2011), and the relationship between disability and poverty is sometimes viewed as a ‘vicious cycle’ (DFID, 2000), in which poverty and disability cause and reinforce each other. Participation is a vital link within this cycle, because poverty is created and reinforced through lack of participation in various spheres of life, such as in education and employment. Disabled people, for whom rates of participation are often limited in these areas (Mitra et. al., 2011), are thus particularly vulnerable to poverty.

Disability and International Policy Frameworks

Much of the literature in this field reveals a general lack of inclusivity and recognition of disability rights in disaster planning and recovery (see, for example, Smith et al., 2012; Kett, 2010; IFRC, 2007; IDRM, 2005). In fact, the 2007 World Disasters Report (IFRC, 2007:86) concludes that disabled people are ‘often ignored or excluded at all levels of disaster preparedness, mitigation and intervention’. This lack of inclusivity is reflected in the Hyogo Framework for Action (UN, 2005), which has dominated international policy on disaster risk reduction over the past decade. This framework, which comes to an end in 2015, makes only one explicit reference to disability, calling for ‘social safety-net mechanisms’ to support disabled people, along with other vulnerable groups. However, the Hyogo Framework has now been replaced by the Sendai Framework, a new international blueprint for disaster risk reduction adopted at the 2015 World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Japan. This new framework reflects a far more rights-based and participatory approach to disaster

planning, observing that ‘persons with disabilities and their organizations are critical in the assessment of disaster risk and in designing and implementing plans tailored to specific requirements’ (UN, 2015:36)

The Sendai Framework was preceded by some significant international policy developments on disaster risk reduction in the Asia Pacific region, which includes the Philippines. The 2011 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Bali Declaration announced a new ASEAN ‘Decade of Persons with Disabilities’ (2011-2020) with an emphasis on disability-inclusive development, calling on Member States to ‘mainstream disability issues in disaster management policies and programmes at regional, national and community levels’ (ASEAN, 2011:Point 16). A year later, the United Nations adopted the Incheon Strategy, entitled ‘To Make Right Real’, which comprises a set of disability-inclusive development goals agreed by Member States within the region. Goal 7 is particularly relevant, calling on Governments ‘to ensure disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and management’ (ESCAP, 2012:31). Importantly, a set of indicators was also identified for measuring progress towards the achievement of this goal, including the availability of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction plans, the provision of disability-inclusive training for service personnel and the proportion of accessible emergency shelters.

Besides these global and regional international frameworks, Government policy towards disaster risk management in the Philippines is guided by the 2009-19 Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP), which recognises a ‘paradigm shift from disaster response to disaster risk reduction’ (NDCC, 2009:12) and sets out a series of strategic objectives in line with the Hyogo Framework. The document emphasizes the need for an enabling environment and multi-stakeholder engagement in disaster planning processes. However, there is a distinct absence of disability-focused organisations from the list of participating stakeholder organisations provided in the Annexes. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that the SNAP also emulates Hyogo in terms of its failure to explicitly promote disability-inclusive disaster planning.

The disability picture in the Philippines

The 2010 census puts the official disability prevalence rate in the Philippines at 1.57%, with the majority living in rural areas (PNSO, 2013). This estimate is based on a narrow, impairment-based definition of disability, and falls well below the estimated worldwide prevalence rate of 15%, contained within the recent World Report on Disability (WHO and World Bank, 2011), as well as conflicting with various competing surveys that have been carried out in the Philippines (Philippines Coalition, 2013). The low official estimate has serious implications in terms of budget allocations and the provision of Government services, in relation to disability, as these are based firmly on the documented figures (*ibid.*).

The Philippines Development Plan 2011-16, a national framework for inclusive growth, acknowledges that disabled people in the Philippines ‘remain among the poorest of the poor... disproportionately uneducated, untrained and socially excluded’ (NEDA, 2011:247), while also recognising that social protection systems for the poor are weak and fragmented. Among these systems are disability benefits and health insurance for those in employment. However, the majority of disabled people in the Philippines are unemployed, and hence excluded from the insurance scheme (Philippines Coalition, 2013). The Government attempted to improve the effectiveness of its social protection programmes by launching the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Conditional Cash Transfer Program in 2008, which focuses particularly on access to health and education among poor households. A Government-commissioned review of this programme noted that around 5% of households within the scheme include at least one disabled family member, despite disability not being a criterion for access to the scheme (Bustos et al., 2013). The review found, however, that various environmental, attitudinal and administrative barriers prevented many disabled people from complying with program conditionalities and fully benefitting from the program.

The most important disability law in the Philippines is the 1992 Republic Act 7277 (known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons), which makes provisions for improving accessibility in both the public and private sectors, as well as entitling disabled people to a 20% discount on medicines and a wide range of services. The Magna Carta defines disability as ‘a physical impairment that substantially limits one or more psychological, physiological or anatomical function of an individual or activities of such individual’ (NCDA, 2009b). This official definition reflects a medicalised perception of disability, which locates disability entirely within the individual (Oliver, 1983), failing to take account of the disabling impact of society. Other significant acts include the 1982 Batas Pambansa Bilang No. 344 (Accessibility Law), which promotes accessibility in both the public and private sectors (NCDA, 2009a), and the 1999 Economic Independence of Disabled Persons Act, which requires Government offices to procure 10% of their office requirements from cooperatives of disabled people (Philippines Coalition, 2013). These two Acts adopt slightly differing definitions of disability, although still reflecting an impairment-based approach.

As Soldatic and Grech (2014) have pointed out, the implementation by Governments of anti-discrimination laws and policies does not necessarily imply that nation states are serious about tackling injustices faced by disabled citizens. Based on a review conducted by the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons in 2002, involving leaders of 150 stakeholder organisations, there are serious concerns within the disability sector regarding the implementation of national laws and the effectiveness of Government programmes in the Philippines (Gust, 2006). One apparent reason for this is the lack of awareness among disabled people themselves about their rights and entitlements. The review of the Pantawid program, referred to earlier, identified that the majority of households with disabled family members were unaware of the Magna Carta and the CRPD, as well as specific entitlements

such as the 20% discount (Bustos et al., 2013).

The Philippines signed and ratified the CRPD in 2008. However, the plethora of disability laws in the Philippines are out of step with the CRPD's rights-based view of disability, due to their failure to acknowledge the social factors that contribute to disability in the way that they define the concept. Additionally, the Philippines Government has yet to comply with reporting requirements of the CRPD, as set out in Article 35 (UN, 2006). In response to this failure, over 20 Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and NGOs joined forces in 2011 to form the Philippines Coalition, with the primary aim of producing an alternative report on the CRPD's implementation within the Philippines. This parallel report highlights various forms of discrimination and injustice faced by disabled people, which are yet to be adequately addressed (Philippines Coalition, 2013).

Philippines fieldwork

My three-week fieldwork visit to the Philippines, in November 2014, coincided with the first anniversary of Haiyan. Many of those who lost their lives to Haiyan lived in the Eastern Visayas region, in which the devastated city of Tacloban was the main focus of world media attention for several weeks following the disaster, and most of the fieldwork was conducted in and around this recovering city. Given the short duration of my visit and the qualitative approach adopted for the study, designed to gain an insight into the subjective experiences and perspectives of disabled people, compromises in terms of scale were inevitably required. However, I was able to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews with 20 disabled people, purposively sampled with the help of NGO contacts, including 14 with physical impairments, three with visual impairments, two with intellectual impairments and one with a hearing impairment. All participants had pre-existing impairments at the time of Haiyan. The strong desire of disabled people to participate in the research was quite striking at times, with several volunteering to take part on hearing about the study from friends that had already been interviewed. In order to gather a range of broader stakeholder perspectives on my research themes, interviews were also conducted with three parents, as well as NGO, DPO and local Government representatives, bringing the total number of interviewees to 32. Given the relatively small number of participants, findings should not be considered representative of the disability sector as a whole.

Conscious of the need to minimise the risk of opening up wounds that were still healing, interviews were guided by a list of general topics, rather than specific questions. Inevitably, however, with the semi-structured format allowing space for participants to exert a guiding influence on the research agenda, some chose to reveal their personal memories of the typhoon. Their accounts became quite emotional at times, particularly as many had lost family members and close friends. On some occasions I suggested moving onto another

topic, but in most cases participants preferred to share these experiences.

Another ethical issue arose around confidentiality, given the tendency of family members and friends to crowd around during interviews, and sometimes even to join in. This was an inevitable consequence of local contextual realities. Firstly, there was a lack of physical space to conduct interviews within local communities, particularly as many were still living in cramped temporary shelters. Available space was generally considered to be communal, at least for the family and often for neighbours as well, rather than private. Secondly, as in much of the majority world, where ‘community is often regarded as more important than the individual’ (IDDC, 2004:4), community life in the Philippines is characterised by interdependence, rather than by notions of individual freedom and privacy. To insist on privacy in such a context could be viewed as inappropriate (Singal, 2010), or even culturally insensitive. Hence it was necessary to accept the presence of onlookers, while acknowledging the possible influence that they could have on the interview findings. It should also be noted, however, that my overwhelming impression was that interviewees did not appear to be at all inhibited by the presence of onlookers who, for the most part, simply listened in respectful silence. Most of the interviews were conducted in Filipino, and the presence of onlookers, some of whom had knowledge of English, may also have helped to militate against the risk of interview content being filtered by NGO field workers who were acting as interpreters.

Research findings

Five main themes emerged from the interview data: surviving the storm; participation in disaster relief operations; access to education; access to health and livelihoods recovery. This section will present the findings, in relation to each of these themes:

Surviving the storm

Those participants that chose to discuss their experiences around the time of Haiyan revealed that they had been aware of typhoon warnings issued in the preceding days, either from media broadcasts or because friends and neighbours had informed them. However, they did not expect the impact to differ much from that of previous storms, which they had weathered in the past. Tacloban is situated at the nexus of Leyte and Samar provinces, which lies in the Pacific typhoon belt, and visiting typhoons are a ‘perennial problem’, as one interviewee put it. Another commented that the Government’s use of the term ‘storm surge’, rather than tsunami or tidal wave, was misleading, since many assumed this to mean no more than high winds and flooding, to which they were accustomed. While some of those interviewed did evacuate, mostly to local schools or gymnasiums, many chose to stay in their homes.

Haiyan struck with such intensity that even those that had evacuated were far from safe, as

highlighted by the testimony of one lady with a visual impairment, who had a two-year-old son:

At the time of Yolanda we were living with my friend – a good Samaritan who had taken us in when my husband left me and my parents threw us out in the street for being too much of a burden. We had evacuated to a nearby school, but after a few hours the roof came off. We were scared of the flying debris, so we crawled out onto the street, where the water was waist-deep. When the storm subsided, at around noon, a neighbour told us that a tsunami wave was coming, so we headed for the mountain. We spent two days up there with no food.

Those who had chosen not to evacuate often found themselves in even more dire circumstances, as described by one participant with a mobility impairment, who was still living in a tent at the time of research:

There were three waves, each getting bigger. My house was destroyed straight away, and I was floating in the storm surge, clinging onto a water container. After about an hour, my nephew found me and carried me on his back to the second floor of the Barangay Hall'¹

In many cases, such as this, it was the practical support of relatives and neighbours that had enabled participants to survive the storm. Strong community interdependence appears to have served as an effective safety net when the typhoon struck. However, some spoke of difficulties that they encountered after the storm in adjusting to living in emergency shelters or, more often, in the homes of neighbours that were still habitable, highlighting the particular difficulties that disabled people may face when they are displaced from their familiar surroundings. One young lady with a visual impairment had survived the storm by hiding under a table with her mother and father, until her nephew arrived and told them that they must evacuate to a neighbour's two-storey house across the road. She described her experience in the months following Haiyan (which she refers to as 'the monster'):

We stayed in the big house for one month, sleeping there at nights and going back to our own house in the day. It is hard to lie in a house that is not yours, especially as a blind person. I was disorientated and could not move around freely. After one month, the Red Cross provided tarpaulin to cover our house and we were able to move back. We received materials to build a solid roof from another NGO after 10 months. Life is still hard. The kitchen has not yet been fixed. I am still frightened. I do not want the monster to come back again.

Physical accessibility issues were highlighted by a visit to one of the Government-run bunkhouses, which served as temporary shelters following Haiyan and were still inhabited by many families that were awaiting permanent resettlement. Entrance doors were routinely

three steps off the ground, due to the risk of flooding, and the communal washrooms were far too cramped for easy access. One resident with low vision reported that he had injured himself on several occasions when accidentally wandering off the narrow concrete path that connected the bunkhouses, a hazard that could easily be rectified through the construction of handrails.

Participation in disaster relief operations

Several of the interviewees were beneficiaries of a Handicap International (HI) ‘cash for work’ programme in the coastal town of Tolosa, a few miles south of Tacloban, which provided 18 days’ work clearing storm debris. An HI representative, in charge of the project, explained that 63 of the 900 beneficiaries were disabled people, who were prioritised for inclusion, and that there were also 26 ‘representatives’ (i.e. family members) of disabled people who were unable to participate themselves. Those who were unable to cope with hard physical labour were assigned alternative duties, such as office work, carrying water to the other workers or watching over the store room. Ten beneficiaries of the scheme were interviewed for this study, and some of them had never previously worked for money. All valued the opportunity to contribute to the relief operations, enabling them to bring much-needed cash into their households and to support their communities at a time of crisis. One beneficiary, who had been assigned the role of a team leader, revealed his determination to make use of the opportunity to demonstrate his abilities:

I considered it a challenge to show that I could do a better job than the able-bodied workers.

Where strong DPOs exist, there are even greater opportunities for disabled people to participate in relief operations. This has been noticed, for example, in earthquake-prone California, where vibrant and politically-engaged DPOs have been able to effectively contribute to disaster preparedness programmes at an early stage (Priestley and Hemmingway, 2007). A representative of the disability-focused NGO Christoffel Blinden Mission (CBM) described a project that had been implemented in Iloilo Province in the Western Visayas, a region that was also in the path of Haiyan. CBM had supported a well-established local DPO, the Association of Disabled People Iloilo (ADPI), to set up and run their own relief operations. The group had carried out a range of activities from an initial mapping exercise and recruiting volunteers (many of whom were disabled) to organising the delivery of relief aid packages to nearly 4,000 vulnerable households, including many with disabled family members. Four months later, as the emergency relief phase due to a close, ADPI set up two Ageing and Disability Focal Points, in response to a growing awareness that vulnerable people often did not know how to access mainstream services. The Focal Points provided an accessible point of contact and information, from where referrals could be made

to existing services in areas such as health, assistive devices, shelter, education and livelihoods. According to the CBM representative, these Focal Points have developed strong partnerships with a range of local and international relief and development partners, enabling them to advocate for greater inclusion of disabled people within mainstream services. He also highlighted the central decision-making role of the DPO, demonstrating that disabled people can be development planners and actors, as well as beneficiaries, in the recovery process:

They worked harmoniously together during the relief phase, so we asked them how they would like to continue their work. They came up with the idea of the Focal Points themselves. The project has changed community perceptions and raised self-esteem among the group's members.

CBM has now committed to extending funding for a further two years, to enable ADPI to focus on longer-term development initiatives across four municipalities, in the areas of health and livelihoods.

Access to health services

Very few of the participants in this study had accessed health services in recent years, beyond those offered by rural health units that mainly offer basic medical care and dispense medicines. Barriers to health care that were identified included lack of health insurance (most were not covered by the Government's health insurance scheme), transportation costs (with many unable to utilise public transport, due to accessibility issues), discriminatory attitudes within hospitals and a lack of rehabilitation specialists (especially ophthalmologists). It was interesting to learn, however, that several respondents did not consider access to physical rehabilitation services to be an important priority post-Haiyan, particularly when compared to more pressing priorities, such as livelihoods and shelter. One participant, with a physical impairment due to polio, revealed that:

I was offered free physical therapy at the Government hospital, but did not bother to attend. I have been coping with my disability all my life, so do not see the need for help now.

This supports Priestley and Hemmingway's (2006) observation that, in post-disaster contexts, disabled people are more likely to focus on environmental concerns than their own narrower impairment-related needs. It should be noted, however, that none of the participants in this study were among the estimated 28,000 people (NDRRMC, 2014a) that sustained injuries due to Haiyan. The experiences and perspectives of those with newly-acquired impairments may well have differed, as is often the case in post-disaster settings (IFRC, 2007; Kett, 2010).

Access to education

The fieldwork included a visit to a mainstream school in Samar province. The school's policy was to accommodate disabled children within mainstream classes where possible, in line with the Government's inclusive education policy, while those who could not be taught within the regular classes attended the on-site special education (SPED) centre, which had been rebuilt following Haiyan. This reflects an integrated approach to special education (Stubbs, 2008), allowing disabled children some social contact with their non-disabled peers, even if they are taught separately.

While most children had been able to resume schooling around one month after Haiyan, interviews conducted with the special education teacher, as well as three parents of children with visual impairments, revealed issues related to Haiyan that were affecting the quality of education for disabled children. Due to the extensive damage to many nearby schools caused by Haiyan, the one-room SPED centre was now catering for 68 children, as compared to around 20 before Haiyan, and was still awaiting funds to purchase new teaching materials. A visit to the home of one 10-year-old child with low vision revealed that the child had lost his glasses during the typhoon, and these were yet to be replaced. The child attended mainstream classes within the school but, according to his mother, had been struggling to cope, particularly since Haiyan. This was not just due to the loss of his glasses, however, but also due to issues around disability awareness and tolerance within the mainstream environment. As his mother explained:

He is made to sit at the back of the classroom, despite his sight problem, and he is sometimes bullied by the other children. His younger sister is in the same class and helps him with his work. If she is unwell I keep them both at home.

This concern reflects one of the findings from the review of the Government's Pantawid Programme, discussed earlier, which also reveals parental concerns about bullying and calls for 'improved teacher attitudes towards children with disabilities' (Bustos et al., 2013:45).

Livelihood recovery

The livelihoods component of my fieldwork included a visit to a rural livelihoods cooperative in the district of Santa Fe, where members of a DPO were engaged in the production of hollow blocks and school furniture. With the workshop located in a fairly isolated rural location, many of the workers lived on-site through the week, returning to their homes at weekends. The cooperative benefited from the Government's 10% procurement policy, which virtually guaranteed a continuing stream of furniture orders. Three members of the cooperative were interviewed, and all of them spoke of their pride at being able to work for a living and support their families, rather than relying on Government or NGO 'handouts'.

Interestingly, they also expressed a strong preference for working alongside other disabled workers within the communal setting. As one put it:

Here we look out for each other and nobody looks down on us.

Two of the NGOs that participated in this study had provided various forms of support to the Santa Fe cooperative. One of these organisations, Handicap International, also provided livelihoods support to individual disabled people within their communities, replacing productive assets that had been lost in the storm or providing grants to replace lost merchandise. One beneficiary of this scheme had run a successful auto-repair business in Tacloban prior to Haiyan. He had lost his wife and one of his three children to the storm, as well as his home and the tools that were essential for his business. He had managed to rebuild his home, which was located in a hazardous low-lying area, with salvage materials, and continued to run his business using borrowed tools. However, the livelihoods grant had enabled him to buy his own tools again, as well as a bicycle so that he could reach his customers. He described how this support had put his recovering business on a firmer footing and re-established his status within the community:

The community now treats me equally. People respect me because I am working like everyone else. My business has recovered and I can support my remaining children

He also underlined the importance of livelihoods by expressing fears at the prospect of having to relocate his home to a safer area, which could potentially disrupt his business. The high priority that he attached to his livelihood was consistent with the views of virtually all respondents in this study.

Applying the HI typology of participation

The findings illustrate various ways in which disabled people had been able to participate in disaster recovery and community rebuilding processes during the year that had elapsed since Haiyan. 'Cash for work' programmes have sometimes been criticised for effectively discriminating against those who are unable to work (see, for example Kett, 2007). These findings demonstrate that such programmes, while perhaps not a realistic option for all, can be inclusive if designed in a way that takes accounts of the impairment-based needs of individual participants. In particular, ensuring that duties are meaningful and appropriate to the individual and allowing for rest breaks as necessary, can help to enable disabled workers to participate. This reflects an awareness of Sen's (2004) 'conversion handicap' which, as Munsaka and Charnley (2013) have observed, highlights the need to compensate for the practical difficulties that may disadvantage disabled people and prevent them from participating on an equal basis with others. The driving force behind the inclusive approach

adopted in Tolosa was the belief that disabled people do have useful skills that can be utilised for the good of their communities. The focus, therefore, was on adjusting elements of the project context that may have made the situation disabling (Bakhshi and Trani, 2006), in order to ensure that this potential contribution was not wasted. This could be viewed as a low-level form of participation, in terms of the HI typology, as disabled participants were acting individually, rather than as representatives of other disabled people. Nevertheless, these findings suggest that the benefits of participation, even at this level, go far beyond the much-needed injection of cash to some of the most vulnerable households. The wider benefits, in terms of raising self-esteem among disabled people and promoting a positive view of disability within recovering communities, though hard to quantify, should not be underestimated.

The ADPI project in Iloilo Province provides an example of a mid-level form of participation in terms of the HI typology, in which disabled people participate as representatives of service users. Disabled people often have similar needs to others in the aftermath of conflicts and natural disasters, but may be disadvantaged in terms of how these needs are provided for (Kett, 2010). The exclusion of disabled people from disaster management processes often leads to ‘the creation of inaccessible physical environments, programmes and relief’ (IDA-IDDC, 2014:1). This project demonstrates that enabling a DPO to take a lead role in the planning and delivery of services can help to ensure that they are provided in a way that meets the needs and priorities of disabled people effectively, recognising that disabled people generally know what is best for themselves, as disability activists around the world have been proclaiming for many years now (Charlton, 1998). The CBM representative emphasized that the high level of cohesion within ADPI was crucial to the success of the project, thus highlighting the need to build capacity within DPOs, so that more are in a position to play such a pivotal role in disaster recovery processes.

For an example of participation that aligns with the third and highest level of the HI typology, it is necessary to draw on an interview which took place in Manila, on return from the disaster-affected provinces. The interviewee was Abner Manlapaz, the president of Life Haven, a DPO and the first independent living centre to be established in the Philippines. Built on the philosophy behind the American independent living movement, Life Haven campaigns for personal assistant services to enable disabled people to live more independently, as well as raising awareness more generally on disability issues within the Philippines. In order to conduct budget research for the parallel report on the CRPD, on behalf of the Philippines Coalition, Life Haven had recently become a member of Social Watch Philippines, a federation of civil society organisations which campaigns to improve policies and service delivery, and has close links with the Government. By linking up with Social Watch, members of Life Haven have been able to participate in consultation clusters that advise the Government on budget priorities in areas such as education, health, employment, the environment and social protection. Before joining Social Watch, according

to Manlapaz, Life Haven was occasionally invited to join workshops organised by NGOs or the Government. Now, however, they were able to engage directly with Government committees on a regular basis, even influencing decision-making at Congress, the highest level of Government, which has put them ‘in the forefront of the work in budget advocacy’. There was also more awareness on disability within Social Watch itself as a result of the partnership, he observed, with disability issues now being raised within cluster meetings even when Life Haven representatives were not present. This example of top-level participation demonstrates the potential of a DPO to influence Government policymaking and planning at the highest levels. The opportunity for this had come about through the willingness of Life Haven to form an alliance with poverty-focused organisations within civil society. This approach reflects an awareness of the commonalities between disability and poverty and supports Yeo’s (2005) call for the disability movement to forge horizontal alliances with more general campaigns to reduce poverty.

Reflections on the relationship between disability, poverty and participation

The UNDP (2013) definition of poverty, presented at the beginning of this article, lists ‘obstacles to participation’ among the dimensions of poverty. The justification for this becomes more apparent when poverty is viewed through a capability lens, because opportunities to participate, at various levels, are among the freedoms that disabled people may have reasons to value. Many of the ‘cash for work’ beneficiaries who were interviewed spoke of their pride at being able to support their recovering communities. The opportunity to help their friends and neighbours was a valued freedom for them, which came about through their participation in the programme. Participation also has the potential to raise awareness of opportunities that might enable disabled people to access other valued freedoms, thus further reducing their poverty in capability terms. This can be seen clearly in the case of the Focal Points, which offered a more structured and lasting solution to poverty issues arising from the experience of disabled people who were initially supported to participate in short-term relief operations.

While these findings highlight the benefits of participation in terms of reducing capability poverty among disabled people, they also suggest that there are potential benefits for the wider community. The ADPI project, for example, provided support to a wide range of vulnerable people, whether disabled or not, within local communities. The participation of disabled people at national policy and planning levels also has the potential to produce wider benefits by raising awareness of disability issues, thus helping to shape more inclusive societies. Considering the potential of participation to produce positive outcomes for society more generally, highlights the theoretical distinction between participation as a means to an end and participation as an end in itself (Ntata, 2002). While the latter approach has some value, in terms of demonstrating respect for human rights and enabling disabled people to

achieve their own desired outcomes, it is only when participation is also viewed as a means to an end that real change will occur in terms of making disaster planning and recovery processes more responsive to the needs of disabled people, and ensuring that more inclusive societies arise from these processes. For these wider benefits to be realised, however, disabled people, and particularly the organisations that represent them, need to be able to participate effectively, particularly at the policy and planning levels. This further underlines the need to ‘develop, strengthen and resource disabled people’s own organisations’ (Hurst, 1999:25), in order to build their capacity to engage at various levels with confidence. It should be recognised, however, that putting this into practice is not necessarily a straightforward task given that DPOs are sometimes dominated by powerful individuals and may not always be representative of the broader community of disabled people (Ingstad, 2001; Whyte and Muyinda, 2007). These are important issues, although beyond the scope of this study.

The preference of some disabled people to work and sometimes live within what are essentially segregated communities, such as the livelihoods cooperative in Santa Fe, where they can draw support from each other, has also been noted in other post-disaster contexts. Research conducted in tsunami-affected coastal areas of South India, for example, revealed that many disabled people preferred to belong to special ‘disability self-help groups’, where they received strong peer support and often participated in group livelihood projects, rather than joining common livelihood groups, open to all, where they feared that their voices would not be heard (Cobley, 2013). In post-conflict Sierra Leone, similarly, disabled people expressed a strong desire to live within segregated communities, where they felt accepted by others and were free to participate fully in meetings and community activities (dos Santos-Zingale and McColl, 2006). This creates something of a dilemma, given the international call, reflected in the CRPD, for disabled people to be treated as equal citizens and to participate fully within mainstream society. However, this dilemma needs to be understood in the context of a resource-poor, post-disaster environment, where the local economy has been decimated and disabled people face stiff competition for the few jobs that are available, as well as being disadvantaged by the continuing existence of disabling barriers, such as inaccessible public transport and discriminatory attitudes.

One solution to this dilemma is to adopt a twin-track approach (DFID, 2000), which involves advocating for mainstream inclusion, so as to gradually remove the barriers and promote the creation of a wider range of mainstream opportunities for disabled people in the long-term, while simultaneously supporting more focused initiatives designed to empower disabled people, of which the cooperatives are an example. Two of the NGO representatives that participated in this study strongly advocated this approach, arguing that this was the most effective way to achieve the twin objectives of promoting inclusion while at the same time ensuring that disabled people are not left behind in the recovery process. As one put it:

We are striving for full inclusion in the mainstream, but this will take a long time. In the meantime we recognise that, for some, their best prospects of employment are within the cooperatives

The capability approach emphasizes the importance of ‘establishing equality in terms of opportunities and choices’ (Bakhshi and Trani, 2006: 6). In terms of livelihoods, the twin-track approach aims to do just that, by tackling the barriers that restrict mainstream opportunities, while simultaneously promoting opportunities and choices outside of the mainstream for those who might otherwise be excluded.

Conclusions

These findings reveal some of the lived experiences of disabled people in the aftermath of the most catastrophic typhoon in the history of the Philippines, highlighting their particular vulnerabilities at the time of Haiyan, as well as various issues that they faced in the months that followed as they struggled to rebuild their lives. However, the findings also demonstrate that disabled people can actively participate in disaster recovery processes at various levels, ranging from individual involvement in relief programmes to influencing national policy and planning processes. The various forms of participation highlighted in this article can play a vital role in reducing capability poverty, since participation itself may constitute a valued freedom, while also providing opportunities to achieve other desired outcomes. This is particularly significant for disabled people because, while they may face similar poverty issues to those faced by the non-disabled poor (Yeo, 2005), their poverty is likely to run deeper on account of the ‘conversion handicap’ (Sen, 2004), arising from the widespread existence of disabling barriers that limit their opportunities to live the lives that they would choose to live.

Another important consideration, arising from these findings, is that the participation of disabled people can also bring benefits for the wider community. This has implications for disaster risk reduction and recovery planning more generally because events such as Haiyan, which may bring death, destruction and societal collapse, also present opportunities to rebuild communities in a more inclusive way. DPOs, in particular, have the potential to participate at all three levels in terms of the HI typology, and effective capacity building is essential to ensuring that they have the knowledge and skills to do so effectively. However, as the alliance between Life Haven and Social Watch illustrates, their voice can also be considerably strengthened through the forging of pro-poor alliances within broader civil society.

Two potential areas for further research arise from this article. Firstly, given this study’s focus on those with pre-existing impairments at the time of Haiyan, research focusing on the

experiences and priorities of those who became disabled as a result of Haiyan would make for an interesting comparison. Secondly, the potential of DPOs to play a significant role in helping to facilitate inclusive disaster planning and management, as highlighted in this article, provides a compelling rationale for research on how to build DPO capacity in a way that enables them to function cohesively and democratically, as well as to effectively represent the views and articulate the needs of disabled people living in areas affected by natural disasters.

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Notes

¹ A '*barangay*', is the smallest unit within the geographic administrative structure of the Philippines.

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