Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

GOOD PRACTICE

Social protection and resilience

Delivering shock-responsive social protection to farmers and fishers in the Philippines

Responding to floods and typhoon in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

Context

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is located in the southwest of the Philippines, and was established in 2019 by ratification of Republic Act No. 11054 (Republic of the Philippines, 2018). BARMM faces a number of significant socioeconomic and environmental challenges. In 2020, 81 percent of the population had insufficient income to cover their basic needs (JICA and MILG, 2020). In 2021, the estimated poverty incidence in the region was 29.8 percent, more than double the national average of 13.2 percent, making the region the poorest in the Philippines. Protracted conflict since the 1960s has hindered development and, although the main resistance group concluded a peace agreement with the Philippine administration in 2014, the level of violence in the region remains constant, often leading to displacement and loss of livelihoods (Rowe, 2019). These stressors are compounded by elevated exposure to natural hazards. BARMM is subject to flooding, landslides, coastal erosion, tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, drought and other climate-related phenomena linked to El Niño (BARMM, 2020). These factors threaten the lives and livelihoods of the population, which mostly lives in lowlands and coastal areas. Dependence on agriculture is high with the majority (61.1 percent) self-employed in small-scale enterprises (Philippines Statistics Authority, 2019). In 2018, 60.4 percent of the total workforce was employed in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, together constituting 55.6 percent of the gross regional domestic product (BARMM, 2020; PSA, 2019).

In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck the region, the rate of infections in BARMM was lower than in the rest of the Philippines – 0.5 percent compared to 2.6 percent, but the social and economic repercussions were significant (Ishikawa, 2024). Additionally, on 29 October 2022, amid ongoing government efforts to counter the negative effects of the pandemic, typhoon Nalgae (locally

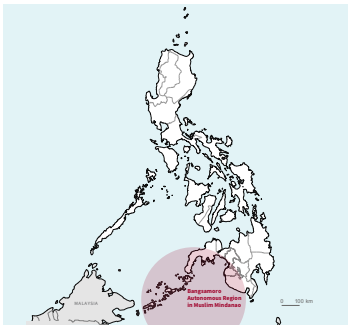
Key facts

Social protection intervention

Delivery of cash assistance to farmers and fishers during the COVID-19 pandemic and in early response to floods through the government's Social Amelioration Programme, Project Tabang and the Emergency Relief Assistance programme.

Geographical coverage

Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), Philippines



Source: United Nations Geospatial. 2020. Map of The Philippines. In: *United Nations.* New York, USA, UN. [Cited 10 January 2025]. https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/philippines

Target group

5 111 farming and fishing households in situations of vulnerability

Gender

Both interventions prioritized households with children and pregnant or lactating women

Types of shock/crisis

- COVID-19
- conflict
- typhoon, floods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FAO delivered social protection to farmers and fishers to counteract the negative impact of the pandemic and of the floods induced by typhoon Nalgae.

named Paeng) brought strong winds and heavy rainfall to the whole country. On the island of Mindanao, the typhoon caused landslides, flooding and flash floods leaving 64 people dead and 17 missing. The disaster affected 557 000 people in the region and displaced 102 000 (UNOCHA, 2022), with Maguindanao identified as the worst-affected province. A rapid assessment conducted by the Humanitarian Country Team revealed that the typhoon had caused heavy damage to houses, as well as vital infrastructures, including schools, water sources and latrines (UNOCHA, 2022). Small-scale food producers reported widespread degradation of ecosystems and disruptions to their activities, including damage to crops and fishing boats and death of livestock.

This good practice factsheet provides information on two interventions implemented by FAO in BARMM: support to farmers, fishers and their households during the COVID-19 pandemic and assistance in the immediate aftermath of the impact of typhoon Nalgae. These two interventions aimed to reduce poverty in BARMM by establishing a strong foundation for mainstreaming risk-informed, shock-responsive social protection including improved access. Lack of access to such programmes is a key factor in persistent poverty, with shocks elevating the risk of falling back into poverty for particularly vulnerable groups.



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Lack of access to shock-responsive social protection is a major contributor to persistent poverty, with shocks increasing the likelihood of vulnerable groups falling back into poverty.

Support to farmers, fishers and their households during the COVID-19 pandemic

The first FAO intervention was implemented between April and August 2021 through two projects:

- ensuring inclusive and risk-informed shock-responsive social protection, resulting in more resilient communities in BARMM, financed by the Joint Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Fund;
- scaling up forecast-based financing/early warning early action and shock-responsive social protection, with innovative use of climate risk information for disaster resilience in the 10 states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), financed by the European Union Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO).

Assistance in the immediate aftermath of the impact of typhoon Nalgae

The second intervention was implemented between 7 November and 15 December 2022 through two projects:

- Scaling up the joint programme on risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), financed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Government of Australia;
- Programmatic partnership between FAO and DG ECHO on increasing capacities and scale for anticipatory action through the social protection system.



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Methodological approach

FAO selected BARMM as the main target area for the aforementioned projects based on the high poverty incidence, exposure to natural hazards and recurring armed violence. FAO's broader efforts in BARMM aimed at enhancing synergies and coordination between social protection programmes, climate change adaptation and disaster risk management. More specifically, FAO sought to reduce the impacts of shocks on farmers and fishers, while building the capacity of government counterparts to implement anticipatory action and shock-responsive social protection.

In fact, in the context of BARMM, lack of access to social protection is a key factor in persistent poverty, with shocks elevating the risk of falling back into poverty for particularly vulnerable groups. The most significant social assistance programme in the Philippines is the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, a form of conditional cash transfer, also referred to as the 4Ps, which in 2021 was allocated 2.3 percent of the national budget (Saw, 2022). As of December 2021, in BARMM, the 4Ps effectively covered over 355 783 households (DSWD, 2021). The beneficiaries are identified mostly through the National Household Targeting System for Poverty

In BARMM, a significant share of non-poor households are vulnerable and could easily fall into poverty if affected by a shock.

Reduction, called Listahanan, a social registry that uses proxy means testing to estimate household income levels and identify eligible households based on indicators like assets, size and other characteristics. According to 2015 data, in BARMM, the Listahanan estimate of regional poverty incidence (49.3 percent) is close to official estimates released by the Philippines Statistics Authority (46.3 percent) (UNICEF, 2021). In response to the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippine government suspended the conditionalities attached to the 4Ps and launched the Social Amelioration Programme. This social protection measure granted an unconditional cash transfer of between PHP 5 000 (USD 104) and PHP 8 000 (USD 167) to low-income households for two months and a cash top-up for all 4Ps beneficiaries (Cho and Johnson, 2022).

However, in BARMM, poverty and vulnerability, albeit related, are not equivalent. In fact, a significant share of non-poor households is categorized as vulnerable and could easily fall into poverty if affected by violence, displacement or natural hazards. Hence, FAO partnered with government counterparts, local and international stakeholders to:

- temporarily expand the provision social protection horizontally to vulnerable households affected by shocks but not entitled to receive assistance;
- vertically increase the amount of social protection delivered to farmers and fishers after they were affected by floods.

Coverage

The first intervention focused on the municipalities of Maluso (province of Basilan), Marogong (province of Lanao del Sur) and Datu Piang (province of Maguindanao del Sur); the second intervention targeted municipalities in Maguindanao del Sur, specifically Datu Salibo, Mamasapano, Sharif Saydona, Sharif Aguak, Datu Unsay and Datu Saudi in the province of Maguindanao. The initial selection process was undertaken in accordance with government suggestions based on local capacity and availability of funds during the pandemic. The second selection process was agreed with the Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD) and donors based on levels of poverty and conflict in each municipality and the impact of the floods.

For the first intervention, in response to the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, FAO and MSSD compiled an initial list of eligible households from the **Registry System for the Basic Sectors in Agriculture**. Key criteria for eligibility (Saw, 2022) included:

- exclusion from the Social Amelioration Programme;
- farming and/or fishing dependency;
- presence of children under 5 years of age;
- presence of pregnant or lactating women.

Among these households, FAO and MSSD prioritized those deemed most vulnerable based on a set of indicators related to food security, nutrition, disaster risk, risk of armed conflict, ethnic minority background and practice of polygamy. With the help of local Social Welfare and Agriculture Officers, FAO selected and provided social assistance to 1 800 households (Saw, 2022). These targeting considerations were incorporated into a registry built by the project and tested earlier in 2021 through an exercise simulating the activation of the anticipatory action protocol for floods.

FAO identified beneficiaries through the Registry System for the Basic Sectors in Agriculture, the MSSD social registry and other government-owned databases.

For the second intervention in response to typhoon Nalgae, **beneficiaries were identified by leveraging the existing MSSD social registry**, data of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform on agrifishing-dependent households, and data of the Ministry of the Interior and Local Government (MILG) on all households actively enrolled in their programmes. The data were uploaded onto UNICEF's Humanitarian Cash Operations and Programme Ecosystem (HOPE) as part of a broader joint effort with MSSD and the BARMM Information and Communication Technology Office to build an inclusive and risk-informed poverty registry for BARMM. The new system is based on household information and captures inherent vulnerabilities, risks and poverty levels through a proxy means testing model (Joint SDG Fund, 2021a). From this combined registry, FAO and partners selected 3 311 households, amounting to over 16 600 people, based on the following criteria:

- presence of children;
- presence of pregnant or lactating women;
- dependency on small-scale food production (mostly farming and fishing);
- vulnerability to poverty and floods.

These criteria were pre-established months before the typhoon in consultation with the BARMM Anticipatory Action Technical Working Group. Preparatory work included a community validation process with local government units to confirm the eligibility of identified beneficiaries. FAO partnered with the Help Organization of Mindanao to complete the pre-registration process (FAO, 2023b).


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Comprehensiveness

The first intervention, responding to COVID-19, was designed as a **horizontal expansion of the Social Amelioration Programme. FAO partnered directly with MSSD to temporarily expand coverage of the programme** and reach vulnerable households not covered by existing social protection schemes. FAO channelled additional emergency funds through existing government systems and reached target beneficiaries in a timely and efficient manner at a critical moment.

The design of the second intervention was informed by early warning systems and was also implemented through the social protection system, specifically **Project Tabang**, managed by the Office of the Chief Minister, and the **Emergency Relief Assistance** programme, managed by MSSD. The approach had previously been tested in March 2022 through a simulation exercise with regional, provincial and local government counterparts to assess the operational feasibility of anticipatory action for floods in the Mindanao River basin. Based on the results of the simulation, FAO and partners drafted an anticipatory action protocol grounded in an analysis of flood maps and forecast models. This protocol intends to provide the basis for the release of emergency cash assistance to vulnerable households in the event of forecasted floods (FAO, 2022; FAO and UNICEF, 2022).

In the case of typhoon Nalgae, an early warning system for floods was active in BARMM at the time of the disaster. However, floods materialized rapidly with a sudden rise in the water level of the Mindanao River offering insufficient lead time to activate and implement anticipatory action. As a result, FAO intervened to support vulnerable households in the early aftermath of the event.

The disbursement modality allowed beneficiaries to choose between different means of delivery including mobile wallets, bank transfers and money remittance agents.

The intervention was designed based on a vulnerability and risk assessment conducted by FAO in 2022 to map vulnerability and risks, and identify food-, nutrition- and livelihood-insecure households in the region. The resulting report was translated into a live dashboard that captures the vulnerability of each community and the risks to which they are exposed. These outputs were then transferred to the Bangsamoro Rapid Emergency Action on Disaster Incidence (READi) housed at MILG.

Adequacy

The first intervention, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, entailed the delivery of one-off cash transfers to beneficiary households. The cash transfer amount consisted of PHP 5 000 per household (around USD 100) and was aligned with the Social Amelioration Programme. While FAO and UNICEF provided the funds, **MSSD led the delivery of social assistance to beneficiary households in cash through the existing disbursement mechanism of the social protection system**. To support vulnerable households affected by the floods, the second intervention delivered a cash transfer of PHP 5 800 (USD 104) per household. The transfer value was defined based on an earlier rapid assessment and covered around 50 percent of the minimum expenditure basket computed by humanitarian partners and the government for emergency response interventions in BARMM (FAO, 2023b). FAO disbursed the funds through a long-term agreement with the Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company, using its corporate disbursement facility. This allowed beneficiaries to choose between different means of delivery including mobile wallets, bank transfers and money remittance agents. Seven different remittance centres contributed to the cash distribution, with 23 branches involved. Concurrently, the projects that supported these two interventions made significant investments in capacity building. As part of its **efforts to strengthen the social protection system and increase its ability to respond to shocks**, FAO partnered in 2021 with the local Volunteer Service Organization, the United Youth of the Philippines Women and the Maranao People Development Center, to conduct



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FAO conducted a simulation exercise to establish and test an anticipatory action protocol for floods in Maguindanao, linked to the social protection system.

a vulnerability risk assessment to identify risk sources in BARMM. The results of the assessment fed into the prototype of an online dashboard which visualized GIS data of vulnerable and at-risk communities. The assessment covered all five provinces, collecting data from 1 711 households in total. Among the respondents, 37 percent were women and 30 percent of the households were female-headed (Saw, 2022). The assessment collected data on demographics, disabilities, income, occupation, dwelling, impact and frequency of disasters, the health of children and food security, among others. Additionally, the assessment used the food consumption score developed by the World Food Programme in 1996 to determine household diet, frequency of food consumption and diversity of food consumed (Saw, 2022; WFP, 2015).

Subsequently, from 14–18 March 2022, **FAO conducted a simulation exercise to establish an anticipatory action protocol for floods in Maguindanao**. The main objectives were to understand and test existing BARMM contingency plans, standard operating procedures and preparedness or response mechanisms, and to see how these could support the activation of anticipatory action for flooding in the province. To do so, the exercise adopted an exploratory, hands-on learning approach to help the participants obtain a better understanding of their own roles and responsibilities. Participants included FAO and UNICEF as observers and facilitators, representatives of the Anticipatory Action Technical Working Group, representatives of the provincial and local government units, and staff from the Ministry of Science and Technology, BARMM READi, MILG, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform, MSSD and the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Energy (FAO and UNICEF, 2022). In parallel, between 2022 and 2023, FAO trained BARMM government staff in data collection using the KoboCollect app and in conflict-sensitivity awareness for social protection programming (FAO, 2023a, 2023c). Finally, during the same period, FAO supported MSSD in institutionalizing a government-led grievance mechanism that beneficiaries could use to raise any concern related to social protection interventions. This mechanism included the establishment of local grievance committees at municipal level, which became a necessary condition for implementing cash transfers in any municipality in the region.

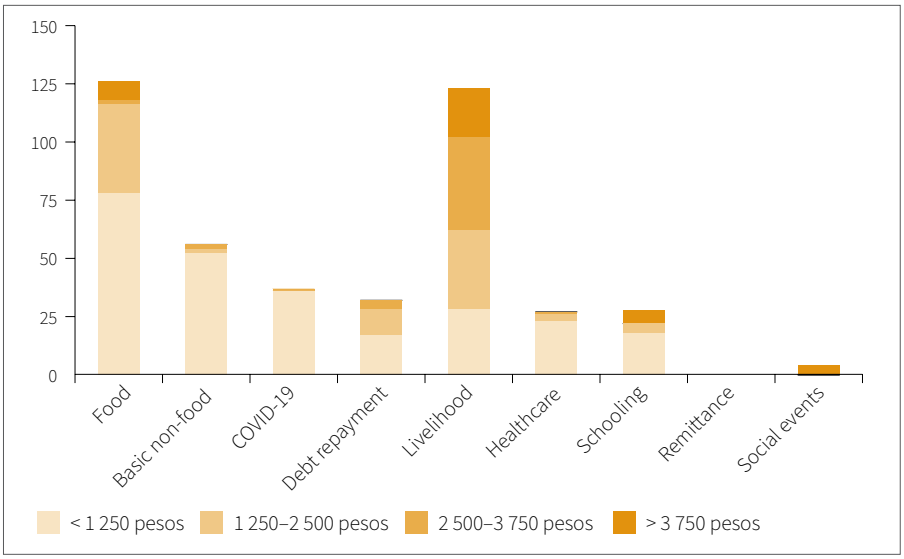


Using the government social protection system to deliver emergency assistance helped to test and strengthen the system itself, promoting legitimacy and ownership by the national and local administration.

Results and impacts

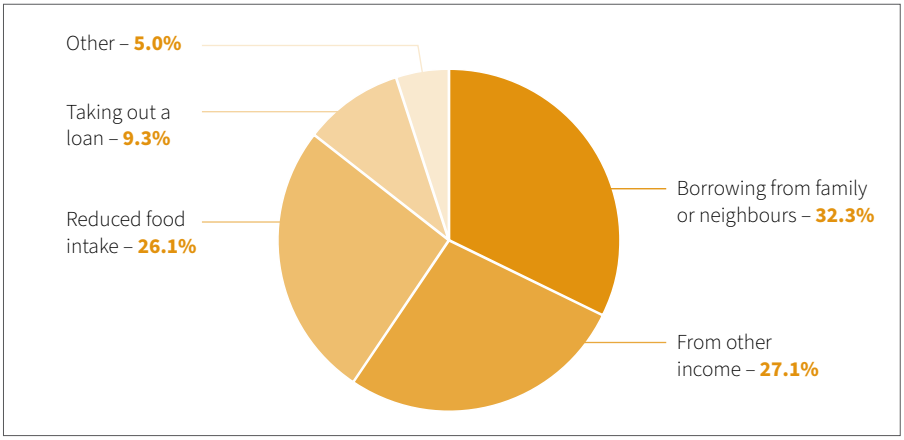
The approach adopted by the interventions has borne clear benefits for external development and humanitarian organizations in terms of cost-effectiveness, timeliness and efficiency. Moreover, the use of existing government systems to deliver emergency assistance means that mechanisms are already in place and have been established locally under the leadership of local authorities. As such, they ideally have more legitimacy in the eyes of the target population and should be aligned to a greater extent with local culture and customs. This approach also promotes ownership by the national government and local administration and allows external partners to strengthen and improve nationally led processes and mechanisms, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the intervention. To analyse the results of the first intervention, FAO interviewed a random sample of 161 beneficiary households. The vast majority (91 percent) affirmed that the timing of the transfer helped them manage the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, 81 percent of female and 78 percent of male respondents indicated that they had used part of the cash to purchase food,

Figure 1. Allocation of cash assistance from the COVID-19 response intervention



Source: FAO. n.d. *Independent evaluation of ECHO's Anticipatory Action and Shock-Responsive Social Protection Project in ASEAN*. Internal document. Mandaluyong City, Philippines.

Figure 2. Alternative household coping mechanisms during the COVID-19 response intervention



Source: FAO. n.d. *Independent evaluation of ECHO's Anticipatory Action and Shock-Responsive Social Protection Project in ASEAN*. Internal document. Mandaluyong City, Philippines.



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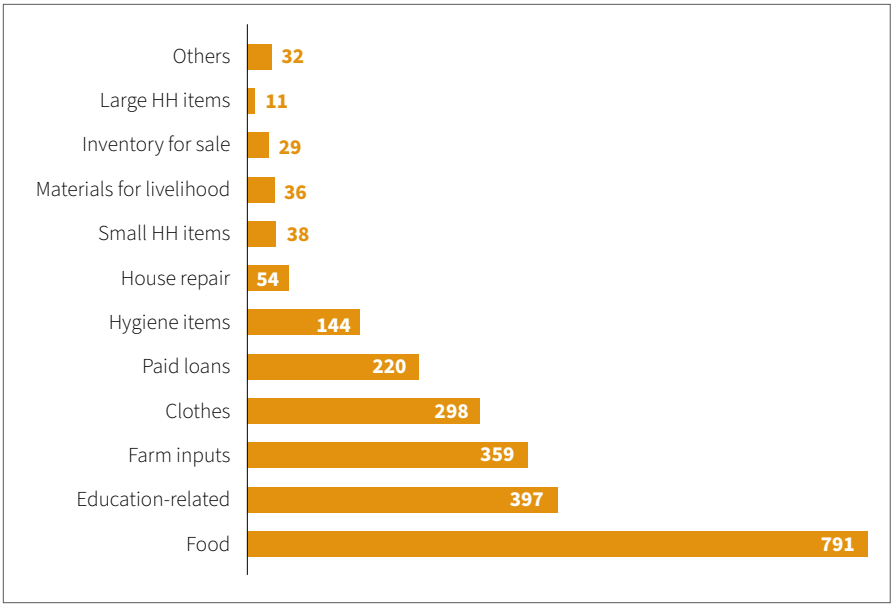
while the majority was generally invested in other goods or services (FAO, n.d.). The second most recurrent expenditure category was livelihood inputs, including seeds and fertilizer. **This suggests that the transfer might have contributed to the resilience of recipient households, allowing them to make investments in their livelihoods, rather than only meeting immediate primary food needs.** Data also suggest that the social protection scale-up helped households to avoid some negative coping strategies in the short-term, particularly increasing debt and reducing food consumption (FAO, n.d.).

In addition to temporarily expanding social assistance, the project also designed an inclusive and risk-informed poverty registry upon which the regional administration could build to reach full-scale coverage. The output included poverty registry instruments such as household and community assessment forms, a new proxy means testing model for BARMM that captured the inherent risks and vulnerabilities prevailing in the region, and a mock-up design of the management information system of the registry. These building blocks allowed MSSD to take ownership of the registry and develop it further with a view to scaling up (Joint SDG Fund, 2021b).

Based on this experience, FAO and UNICEF collaborated with MSSD to improve its operation manuals for social protection programmes (Joint SDG Fund, 2021b). Additionally, in May 2021, FAO incorporated lessons learned from the intervention into two scalability frameworks to deliver social assistance as anticipatory action in the event of forecasted typhoons or drought. The document provided recommendations to the government on early warning triggers to scale up social assistance in the case of forecasted drought and on possible financial resources to fund such emergency operations (Saw, 2022).

With respect to the second intervention, responding quickly to the impacts of typhoon Nalgae, the results were studied by the Health Organization of Mindanao in partnership with FAO, MSSD and UNICEF. A post-distribution monitoring assessment they conducted using KoboToolbox found that 98 percent of respondents reported spending part of the cash assistance on food (FAO, 2023b). Other popular areas

Figure 3. Allocation of cash assistance from the typhoon response intervention (multiple responses) – number of people



Source: FAO. n.d. *Independent evaluation of ECHO's Anticipatory Action and Shock-Responsive Social Protection Project in ASEAN*. Internal document. Mandaluyong City, Philippines.

Leveraging the social protection system allowed to deliver assistance to affected households within a short period of time.

of expenditure were education-related items (49 percent), agricultural inputs (44 percent), clothes (37 percent), loan repayment (27 percent) and hygiene items (18 percent). While the cash transfers were unconditional, **the assistance was largely used to satisfy basic needs**, as assumed in the calculation of the emergency minimum expenditure basket (FAO, 2023b).

Overall, beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the payout process, with 98 percent of respondents stating that cash was their preferred means of assistance in such circumstances. They also demonstrated an informed understanding of the process and good awareness of the selection criteria. Respondents characterized the cash distribution process as convenient and safe, with almost all (99 percent) reporting that they had travelled safely to the payout centres and back. The few that reported unsafe journeys had accidents while travelling or were involved in violent feuds with other clans (FAO, 2023b).

Finally, with respect to gender dynamics, it was not possible to assess whether the intervention contributed to any meaningful changes. However, a significant proportion of respondents reported that the husband and wife made decisions on how to spend the cash assistance together (45 percent), while 23 percent of respondents stated that the wife alone made the decision and 29 percent the husband (FAO, 2023b).

More broadly, leveraging the BARMM social protection system allowed FAO and its partners to respond early to the floods and deliver assistance to affected households within a short period of time. The capacity-building efforts and partnership between FAO and BARMM ministries enabled shared standard operating procedures to be established and tested. These procedures will be crucial should the BARMM government need again to mobilize external support for the emergency expansion of social protection programmes. More specifically, the collaboration ensured access to the MSSD registry for targeting well ahead of the event, which in turn allowed for the swift identification of beneficiary households, which is particularly important in the context of disaster-risk management. Finally, leveraging the BARMM social protection system ensured that the beneficiaries were familiar with the process and could easily access support.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Sustainability

Both interventions formed part of a broader agenda pursued by FAO and other partners to establish an adaptive and shock-responsive social protection system. As such, most of the results described in this factsheet will have a long-lasting impact and inform subsequent policies and programmes. The results themselves and the tools developed were passed to the BARMM government. MILG took ownership of the technology introduced through the vulnerability risk assessment and has allocated a budget to maintain and update the tool. The prototyped poverty registry has been integrated into the MSSD management information system plan. Finally, the anticipatory action scalability frameworks for drought and typhoons are ready to be used in case of activation and are integrated into the Bangsamoro disaster risk reduction and management plan. In 2023, recognizing that the Mindanao River basin is the second largest in the country, FAO initiated discussions with the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Asia and Africa and the Mindanao River Basin Management Council to develop anticipatory action protocols for flooding. The protocol includes the delivery of cash assistance through the social protection system, to help vulnerable households cope with the impacts of the hazard and secure their livelihoods to the extent possible.

These activities have been complemented by provisions to foster institutional coordination between government and non-government partners. In 2020, FAO and UNICEF established a BARMM interministerial coordination mechanism for risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection, which was co-chaired by the Office of the Chief Minister and the UN Resident Coordinator, and included representatives of 11 ministries. Within this framework, FAO established a BARMM Anticipatory Action Technical Working Group in 2021, co-chaired by representatives of the MILG and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform, and mandated to provide technical advice to the Bangsamoro Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (BRDRRMC) on matters of preparedness and anticipatory action – including risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection. This coordination system was institutionalized through BARMM memorandum no. 0392 issued by the BRDRRMC in July 2021 (Saw, 2022). Additionally, in 2022, FAO and partners established a BARMM Cash Working Group. Contrary to practice in other parts of the world, the Group is co-led by the regional administration through MSSD and is committed to strengthening links between humanitarian cash assistance and social protection in the region.

These efforts represent a significant outcome in terms of coordinating and bridging the gap between development and humanitarian approaches. The interventions described here provide a powerful example of how risk-informed, shock-responsive social protection can be an effective tool to implement humanitarian operations in a manner that contributes to and considers development outcomes.

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Replicability and upscaling

The interventions were instrumental in building a solid proof of concept and supporting the regional administration in developing a risk-informed, shock-responsive social protection system in BARMM, where cash assistance is a strategic means to improve food security, health and nutrition while protecting vulnerable households from shocks (FAO, 2021). This same approach has been tested by FAO in the Philippines since 2016 in various regions, including most recently in Region V (Bicol) in the Province of Catanduanes.

In the case of BARMM, in addition to significant uptake from the government, the positive results of the interventions helped to mobilize additional resources, which were invested in replicating the approach in different municipalities and scaling it up over time. The results of the initial investment made by the Joint SDG Fund persuaded the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to commit AUD 1 730 000 (USD 1 370 000) to scale up work on risk-informed, shock-responsive social protection in BARMM (Saw, 2022). This upscaling was essential to support BARMM in enhancing its social protection and humanitarian cash transfers through improvements to systems, expansion of coverage, and the introduction of other forms of social protection intervention and safety nets for rural populations, particularly in the four most conflict-affected municipalities (Datu Salibo, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Mamasapano and Shariff Aguak).

Thanks to the results of the first intervention and the broader ASEAN project funded by DG ECHO, FAO entered into a three-year Programmatic Partnership with the donor to continue work on risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection and anticipatory action in five countries in South and Southeast Asia, including the Philippines.

The interventions also served to highlight persistent obstacles and challenges that must be addressed in any replication or upscaling of this approach. First, post-distribution monitoring showed that beneficiaries had only limited knowledge of the project's feedback mechanism. While they reported that they felt listened to, they still relied strongly on informal face-to-face interactions with local government representatives instead of the dedicated hotline. Despite increased ownership by the regional government of grievance and feedback mechanisms, additional work is needed to persuade beneficiaries to raise concerns through proper official and independent channels (FAO, 2023b). Second, post-distribution monitoring highlighted difficulties in collecting information and data from beneficiaries living in remote communities. This challenge necessitated the adoption of a mixed sampling method and risked the underrepresentation of remote communities with consequences for the reliability of findings such as preference for assistance in the form of cash versus goods (FAO, 2023b).

Risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems need dynamic targeting systems to reach the most vulnerable in times of crisis, including those newly poor as a result of the crisis.

Key learning

These interventions yielded the following key lessons on piloting and institutionalizing risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection, which have shaped FAO's subsequent projects in the Philippines and elsewhere.

- **Act early, possibly in anticipation, to protect lives and livelihoods through social protection.** Although the lead time in the case of typhoon Nalgae was insufficient to implement anticipatory cash assistance, the presence of an established system with defined protocols allowed FAO, UNICEF and government partners to reach vulnerable people early and prevent the effects of the sudden flooding from forcing households to resort to negative coping mechanisms. Social protection proved once again to be an adequate means to reach the most vulnerable parts of the population in times of crisis, more rapidly, more efficiently and in a more cost-effective manner.

- **Wider government provision of cash transfers via the social protection system during the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact and underscored the importance of social protection in bridging the gap between humanitarian and development approaches.** Shock-responsive social protection was already quite advanced in the Philippines prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but most interventions were still externally funded. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic represented a major step in embedding the approach as a core government strategy for disaster risk management.

- **The targeting mechanisms used to identify beneficiaries of social protection systems should be dynamic and interoperable.** As in the case of major typhoons, the COVID-19 pandemic or any severe shock, the newly and near-poor risk being systematically excluded from any form of support. Most poverty registries are static and can often be outdated. In fact, there is little difference in the circumstances of people who live just above the poverty line and those who live just below it. Even minor shocks can rapidly change their living conditions and suddenly increase the number of households living in poverty. To be effective, risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems need dynamic targeting systems to reach the most vulnerable in times of crisis and to consider those that will become more vulnerable and newly poor as a result of the crisis.

- **Design adequate and effective feedback mechanisms.** The early response to typhoon Nalgae showed a clear preference for face-to-face feedback mechanisms. The effectiveness and the promotion of hotlines should therefore be reviewed. A more appropriate solution could be the design of multichannel feedback mechanisms, including post-distribution community consultations and adequate training of community workers. The capacity of community workers to effectively acquire data and information on the outputs of distribution and their effect is important here. For example, relevant training should be coupled with greater involvement of female community workers and enumerators, whose limited presence was noted by beneficiaries.

- **Ensure good beneficiary access to the assistance provided.** This was of particular relevance for the response to typhoon Nalgae, given the resulting impact on the environment and infrastructures. Some beneficiaries did not own or use mobile telephones, while others living in remote areas had to travel

A functioning social protection system is an essential precondition for implementing risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection schemes.

long distances to collect the cash. In this case, the wide array of different cash delivery mechanisms substantially enhanced accessibility. However, this aspect needs to be considered in the design and planning of similar interventions, including through organized consultations with remote communities.

- **A strong institutional architecture is needed to link disaster risk management and social protection.** A functioning social protection system is an essential precondition for implementing risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection schemes. At the same time, anticipatory action and shock-responsive social protection needs to be anchored in disaster risk management plans, strategies and norms to ensure a clear mandate and alignment with government priorities.

- **Ensure coordination between different stakeholders through dedicated interagency and interministerial mechanisms.** Having a mechanism for interagency coordination in place as part of the overall institutional architecture is of particular importance, and ideally should have some political influence and involve all key players, including ministries of finance. In fact, anticipatory action and social protection are cross-sectoral approaches that bring together different line ministries, government departments, humanitarian agencies and development actors around the same table.



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- Maranao People Development Center
- Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company
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- Ministry of Social Services and Development
- United Nations Children's Fund
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
- United Youth of the Philippines – Women
- Volunteer Service Organization
- World Food Programme

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