

Oxfam in Philippines

- Oxfam has worked in the Philippines since 1987
- We focus on increasing opportunities for women dealing with disasters, and lobbying for change



The situation

Most poor people in the Philippines live in rural areas. Agricultural productivity has been low since the 1990s – many farmers struggle with high levels of debt, as well as the problems involved in accessing markets and buying land. More recently, rising food prices have also had a big impact because of the country's rapidly growing population and a shortage of land suitable for crops.

Within this context, women face particular difficulties, with only 46% employed in 2005, compared to 74% of men – though women work 60% of the total number of unpaid working hours. For many women, getting a say in political

and economic decisions is also a major struggle – and violence against women remains a big problem.

Things aren't made any easier by the country's position in the seismic "ring of fire", which leaves it vulnerable to floods, earthquakes, landslides and typhoons. Or by the ongoing civil conflicts in the Mindanao region, which have forced approximately 2 million people to leave their homes since the 1960s. It's a situation that makes breaking free from poverty and building a secure future even tougher, especially when high levels of government debt continue to hamper economic growth.

In numbers*...

75,000
total people helped



Photo: Veejay Villafraanca

How Oxfam is helping

Oxfam has worked in the Philippines since 1987. Our work focuses on:

- lobbying for change through our advocacy work
- increasing opportunities for women through our development work
- dealing with disasters, both through response and preparedness measures, through our humanitarian programme

Left: Oxfam works to emphasise and support the vital role women like farmer Trinidad Domingo play, by helping them work together and by providing tools and financial assistance.

Advocacy

Poverty isn't just about a lack of resources. In a wealthy world, it's about bad decisions made by powerful people. Oxfam campaigns hard, putting pressure for real lasting change.

One of our enduring campaigns is calling for more government investment in small-holder agriculture to ensure the country's food security. This means importing less rice and strengthening the capacity of our farmers to produce rice.

Another is for world trade rules to be fair. Today, the rules are tipped in favour of rich countries: their products flow freely to

the country at minimum or even zero taxes. Their products are cheap because part of production costs is subsidised by their governments. Meanwhile, local products cost more to produce because farmers and fishers receive very little support from the government.

We also join the global call on rich countries to sign a legally binding agreement that commits them to cut their carbon emissions and to help support the efforts of poor countries to cope with the creeping and potential impacts of climate change.



Photo: Oxfam

Lobbying for pro-poor and pro-women government policies on climate change, trade and agriculture.

Development

Mindanao is the geographical focus of our development work. Through the Oxfam Mindanao Programme (OMP), we work with civil society and the private sector to help build poor men and women's capacity as economic leaders.

Our focus is on women because they account for the second largest number of the poor population next to children. Yet, at the same time, poor women, when given equal opportunity, have the

potential to rise above poverty. With our Poor Women's Economic Leadership programme, we aim to build women's negotiating power in both their own households and in the economic markets in which they engage to sell their produce and/or services.

At the heart of OMP's operations is a vision of women free from armed conflict, violence and discrimination, thus able to realise their right to a secure livelihood.



Photo: Veejay Villafranca

Women like Nida Rizalado often give up meals for their children when food is scarce.

Humanitarian

Our response to emergencies – clean water, food, shelter and sanitation – keeps people alive. Long-term, we fund poverty-reducing projects that enable people to rebuild their lives, livelihoods, and communities. We've provided relief and humanitarian protection to communities displaced by natural disasters Typhoon Reming and Frank, Tropical Storm Ketsana and Parma, and the long-standing armed conflict in Central Mindanao.

Committed to the Hyogo Framework of Action 2005-2015, we work closely with the Australian Agency for International Development in a 'Safer Communities Project' to ensure disaster-resilient communities in the Philippines.

At the core of this partnership is the recognition that a key gap in disaster management is the lack of an effective

knowledge management system for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The partnership thus aims to impart, deepen and replicate lessons from good practices of communities, with involvement from local and national government and civil society organisations.

In 2009, we piloted the establishment of a Disaster Risk Management Office, a permanent office in a local government unit, that dramatically reduced the loss of lives and livelihoods and damages to properties brought on by disasters in the provinces of Saranggani, Sorsogon and Pampanga.

Recognising the important role of women in disaster management, we seek not only to highlight the impact of disasters on women, but also identify their contribution in building resilient communities.



Photo: Jerry Carreon

People waded through the water carrying hygiene kits distributed by Oxfam in the aftermath of Typhoon Ketsana, October 2009.