



# NDYS in Action, Newsletter

Natural Disaster Youth Summit Monthly News

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## The VOICE of YOUTH is NEEDED!

Editor: Daniel Paz,  
Salta, Argentina



Topics

**Climate Change and disaster reduction**  
The fight in Haiti.

## The fight in Haiti

Some 300,000 people suffered physical injury during Haiti's devastating earthquake, but as a day of national mourning was marked exactly one month later, the full extent of the hidden, psychological damage is still unclear in a country with the most rudimentary of mental health infrastructures.

"We are faced with an enormous task," said Roseline Benjamin, one of only four psychologists in Haiti, who works as the government's focal point for post-disaster mental health and "psychosocial services". "Before the earthquake, our mental health practitioner community was already stretched. And now the needs are multiplying," she added.



It was difficult to breathe while all the dust was in the air.

Alongside the four psychologists, Haiti has one psychiatrist. The sole psychiatric hospital survived the earthquake but even before the earthquake had three times as many in-patients as beds. Its capacity is now being stretched even further because – for want of other functioning medical facilities – it has become a walk-in centre for the injured and homeless.

Amanda Melville, a child protection specialist with UNICEF who now coordinates a group of UN agencies and NGOs working on mental health and psychosocial services in Haiti, told IRIN aid workers face a daunting task. "The scale of this is unprecedented. There have been disasters, but not at this level and not so devastating," she said. "This is the first time in Haiti, if not worldwide, we have come together at the same table to discuss these issues. This is not a standalone topic, but yet we had not pulled together," she added.

UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Education to create radio messages about coping and seeking help for the psychological effects of the earthquake. International Medical Corps is evaluating how to train national primary and secondary health workers about treating mental illness and distress.

The earthquake came in the wake of a long series of political upheavals and natural disasters, all of which contributed to undermining psychological wellbeing. For example, Haiti's largest HIV service provider, Gheskio, has recorded spikes in gender based violence after each bout of political unrest.

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Some 8,000 people died in natural disasters in Haiti between 1980 and 2008, according to the University of Louvain in Belgium.

In the absence of government post-disaster services, religious groups, community, family and cultural resilience have been the main sources of support after disasters, according to the “International handbook of emotional healing: ritual and practices for resilience after mass trauma”.

UNICEF’s Melville said that resilience is not enough. “There are two sides of the coin: a co-existence of deep tragedy, grief [along with] tenacity and the desire to keep on living. There is always this tension in emergencies. People may say they are ok, but when you scratch the surface, there is deep grief.”

While some local health workers have requested tranquilizers to address the increase in symptoms of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress, drugs should not be the first response, said the International Medical Corps child psychiatrist Lynne Jones.

Jones is a member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on mental health and psychosocial support, which has issued guidelines for emergency services.

“If people are coming with aches and pains related to psychological stress with no organic cause, by just giving them drugs, they are likely to keep coming for aspirins or vitamins and the problem is not resolved,” Jones said. She also said that priority should be placed on helping people recreate social networks to avoid isolation, and to give people an appropriate opportunity to mourn.

Source: [www.irinnews.org](http://www.irinnews.org)

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**Climate Change and disaster reduction**  
Many people was displaced by Ketsana.

## Many people was displaced by Ketsana



Nearly five months after tropical storm Ketsana and two typhoons ravaged northern Philippines, evacuation centres are starting to close but thousands of people are still displaced, aid workers say.

“The situation is definitely getting worse and people’s coping mechanisms are being stretched to the limit,” said Paula Brennan, Oxfam’s Ketsana response manager.

“Evacuation centres are closing for a number of reasons. The churches, for example, closed [for] Christmas mass; the schools were closed when classes started,” she also said.

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On 26 September, tropical storm Ketsana inundated 80 percent of Manila on the island of Luzon, home to some 12 million people. A week later, Typhoon Parma made landfall, drastically affecting outlying regions that were already heavily flooded. Typhoon Mirinae wreaked additional havoc at the end of October. The National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) says more than 10 million people were affected.

As of 30 January, 24,318 people or 5,253 families were being hosted in 54 evacuation centres, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). However, the actual numbers of displaced are thought to be higher, since the figure does not include those staying with relatives.

Some 230,000 homes have been either completely or partially destroyed, according to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Anna Maravilla, a 43-year-old single mother, once ran a fishing business with her brother. But Ketsana caused the lake to overflow, destroying her home. "My home was totally wiped out. We cannot go back there because the government has declared the land uninhabitable," she said. Since September, she and her three children have been relocated three times.

The Laguna Lake Development Authority estimates that originally 400,000 families in the area were affected by the onslaught of the storms. "First, we occupied a public school, but we had to move when classes started. We were then moved to a basketball court... but we had to leave when the residents wanted to use it," said Maravilla. Maravilla now lives in a small shack on a poultry farm that was converted into an evacuation centre with 47 other families.

The makeshift centre has no electricity; there are two running taps and two toilets. Oxfam is building four showers and toilets. "Our life before was not easy, but we were able to survive. We did not have to live like this. At least I had my own house, my own toilet," said Maravilla, who is also missing her daily income of at least US\$10 from fishing. "I used this [money] as revolving capital and managed our daily expenses. Now, I have nothing to live on," she said.

Others in the centre have turned to scavenging and re-selling aluminium cans and paper.

The Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) released in December by the government, the World Bank and other agencies, estimated that \$942.9 million was required to meet recovery needs, while \$3.48 billion was needed for reconstruction. "Under normal conditions, shelter was already a problem, but the extent of the devastation [wrought] by [Ketsana] was simply overwhelming," said Edin Garde, programme manager for the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) in the Philippines. The UN launched a flash appeal for \$74 million in October 2009, which was revised a month later to \$143.7 million.

However, as of 16 February 2010, only 39.2 percent has been funded, according to the UN's Financial Tracking Service (FTS). Shelter, along with education, protection and economic recovery, are the least funded. "Funding shelter is very expensive. It costs about \$543 to build one transitory house and \$1,489 for a more permanent structure," said Garde. "It is much easier to fund relief efforts like food, for those who want to reach out to more people and see immediate results." "You cannot build a structure on land without first assuring its safety conditions, and this takes time," Garde said.



**Comments:** It hurts you know? I mean, reading about the changes in people's lives...And you wonder how that can be possible? And I am far from them...I feel so sad...

It is time for governments to take conscious and prepare their country or city and teach people! With better preparation you can avoid a terrible disaster! It is not necessary to be a genius to realize about that. Money is the thing, but how much do their lives worth?



*"Communication saves lives!"*

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