Review of Women's Studies 33: 1-36

Navigating Tiwala in Disasters: Rural Women Leaders and Social Constructions of Trust With International Humanitarian Organisations

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Abstract

Tiwala is a multidimensional social construct "associated with the consistency of people's words and actions . . . , the fulfillment of promises . . . , and basic respect for people [with] solicitude . . . and willingness to help" (Mangubat, 2008). It is loosely translated to "trust," a component of social capital, which in Philippine rural disaster contexts is crucial to communities'—and women's—access to resources in humanitarian response. Local women's organisations play key roles in disasters, and they perceive that their social capital with, and trust in, international nongovernment organisations (INGOs) can address their unmet humanitarian needs. Yet there is limited documentation and analysis of the experiences and perspectives of local women's organisations in the intersection of social capital, trust, and disaster resilience in the Philippines. The objectives of the study are to: (a) illustrate their experiences in partnering with humanitarian INGOs in disasters, and (b) examine how they navigate Tiwala within these partnerships through

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ISSN 0117-9489

semistructured interviews and thematic data analysis. It finds that rural women leaders tend to place Tiwala in INGOs when they establish externally-supported credibility, consistently exhibit trustworthy behaviours, espouse a sense of mutuality and reciprocity, and deliver aid that is appropriate and impactful to communities. Rural women leaders call for a humanitarian and development system that is Filipino and feminist in nature and praxis: a way onwards that is built upon their lived experiences, rooted in a culture of mutual Tiwala, and anchored by their holistic and rights-based approach to gender and disaster resilience.

Keywords: disasters, disaster resilience, social capital, linking social capital, trust, tiwala, gender, women's organising, sikolohiyang Pilipino

Introduction

In 2023, the Philippines ranked first in the world in disaster risk—an assessment that calculates severity of natural hazards and overall societal vulnerability to negative impacts (Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft [BEH] & International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict [IFHV], 2023). Frequent high exposure to typhoons, earthquakes, and other disasters exacerbated by climate change contextualises the country's established humanitarian system (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2012). The Philippines is characterised by a vibrant civil society of local and international nongovernment organisations (NGOs) and networks working with government and maximising social capital to coordinate emergency responses and increase disaster resilience (Scriven, 2013; Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2013; Sumaylo-Pearlman & Patel, 2021). Within this structure, it matters to "acknowledge resilience and social capital in terms of power, and consider who has links to power and resources, and who can mobilise and access them, and who cannot" (Panday et al., 2021).

International NGOs (INGOs) are key humanitarian actors as they are able to mobilise resources, provide funding, and augment government services more quickly through less bureaucratic mechanisms. However, they tend to trust and partner more frequently with larger local NGOs already well-experienced in emergency response or familiar with the humanitarian system, and less frequently with local women's organisations that are perceived as "new" to the humanitarian sector. Women's organisations are not new to humanitarian work or partnerships, yet the literature is mostly silent about their existence, value, and engagement.

Community-based, local women's organisations are where women come together "to meet their individual and collective needs [and to] access resources that are often denied them" (Verceles, 2014) as "given women's disenfranchisement from most sources of institutional power, their collective strength is seen as the most important transformatory resource at their disposal" (Kabeer, 1994), and this is especially evident in hazard-prone, remote, and rural communities. Where gender and disaster resilience are studied in the Philippines, they do not intersect with social capital research that is grounded in Filipino psychology—such as *Tiwala*, a layered indigenous concept often simplistically abridged to "trust" in the English language.

Centring Tiwala and local women's organisations in disaster studies in the Philippines can be a locally-led response to the international and historically colonial roots of humanitarian aid and its current system. As such, this study centres local women's organisations at the intersection of social capital, trust, and disaster resilience in the Philippines. Its objectives are to:

1. Illustrate the experiences of local women's organisations in partnering with humanitarian INGOs in disasters.
2. Examine how they perceive Tiwala within these humanitarian partnerships.

To explore this intersection, it endeavours to weave together the intricately linked—yet often siloed—concepts of gender in disaster resilience, social capital and disaster resilience, and gender in social capital and disaster resilience.

Disasters are gendered (Magturo et al., 2020; Quay & Jack, 2020; Enarson & Chakrabarti, 2009). There is a clear difference along gender lines in disaster response and recovery, as patriarchal social norms disproportionately restrict women's equal access to resources and undermine their resilience—more so if they are poor, of colour, with disability, elderly, not of age, unaffiliated, and/or of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity (Le Masson, 2016; CARE, 2016; Ganapati, 2012; Barrameda, 2012).

Resilience is the "[capacity to] withstand, adapt, or recover quickly from a traumatic event" (Abramson et al., 2014), although "gendered norms impact directly on women's ability to respond to a natural hazard" (Bradshaw & Fordham, 2015) and in disasters, "the perspectives of women are not always heard, and women's organisations are often not supported" (Smyth & Sweetman, 2015). Yet where local women are organised, they are better positioned to access resources through relationships with humanitarian actors (Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan [PKKK], 2021; Balite et al., 2021; CARE, 2021)—that is, they are able to strengthen their disaster resilience by making use of social capital.

Social capital is the ability of individuals or communities to "use relationships to access financial, emotional, physical or other resources to fulfil survival and recovery needs" (Panday et al., 2021), and in a disaster context is a "resource whose mobilization can lead to rapid action and coordination" (Nilsen et al., 2019) and "an important variable to reduce disaster risk" (Han et al., 2019). *Linking social capital* are "vertical ties between people with fewer economic resources and political power and those who have precisely the opposite advantages" (Loebach & Stewart, 2015). It is a form of social capital whose "key feature is differences in social position or power" (Claridge, 2004); in disasters, it determines how quickly needs are met, how many lives are saved, and if social justice is achieved (Loebach & Stewart, 2015; Han et al., 2019). INGOs take on the role of "brokers in linking social capital [as] funders recognise the importance of the established linking social capital and continue to fund NGOs that have good relationships with the wider community" (Claridge, 2004), and specifically in the Philippine humanitarian context, INGOs

must endeavour to establish, develop, and sustain relations with grassroots communities through intuitive, indigenous, and bottom-up approaches in fulfilment of their global commitments to "localisation" or locally-led humanitarian action (Charter for Change, 2021; Inter-Agency Standing Committee [IASC], 2021). It is in their interest and objectives to evolve from the traditional donor-beneficiary relationship that has so far characterised local partnerships, which when left unchecked perpetuates uneven partnership power dynamics to the disadvantage of community-based groups and organisations (Peace Direct, 2021).

Social capital is gendered (Molyneux, 2002; Silvey & Elmhirst, 2003) as evident in the current recognition and necessity for global humanitarian reform described above; and as seen in the 2015 Nepal earthquake, where "families with elderly members and female-headed households often lacked *linking relationships* with government or non-governmental agencies, and as a result could not seek external assistance to secure relief materials or funding" (Panday et al., 2021). Linking social capital is comprised of several components (Claridge, 2004), one of which is Trust.

Methodology

Research Framework

Trust is "an outcome of repeated interactions, credible legal institutions, reputations" (Woolcock, 2001), a "precondition" (Fukuyama, 1995, as cited in Mangubat, 2008), and "a form of risk-taking . . . that facilitate[s] social integration towards disaster recovery [and is] the reason why individuals engage with others" (Robles & Ichinose, 2016). Trust is "essential for the existence of social capital" (Coleman, 1990, as cited in Claridge, 2020) and is "socially and culturally situated, so has an element of intersubjectivity, and is grounded in subjective experience" (Claridge, 2020). "Attempts to construct the potentially multiple meanings and dimensions of trust need to be done within the culture in which it is embedded" (Mangubat, 2008), as "social capital and disaster resilience are context-specific" (Panday et al., 2021). Hence, in the Philippine context, it is necessary to examine and probe Trust within the culture and language

of Filipinos. To differentiate the generic "Trust" from the Filipino "Tiwala," this study applies social constructionism, which "privileges the local context—how people construct and interpret their realities, and what becomes meaningful to them in their interaction with others . . . what people find meaningful and relevant may be understood better if their particular life world were explored" (Mangubat, 2008, p. 132).

A social construction of Tiwala in rural poor communities revealed that:

> Tiwala is a basic respect for people [with] solicitude and caring for others (*pagmamalasakit*) and willingness to help, particularly in difficult times (*pagtulong/pagdamay*). . . . It is perceived to be multidimensional, and is associated with the consistency of people's words and actions, as well as in the fulfillment of promises. . . . It has multiple levels of self, *kapwa*, organisation or group, and Diyos (roughly, "God"), and with bases in *katapatan* and *pakikipagkapwa*. (Mangubat, 2008)

In Filipino culture, *tiwala sa kapwa* is "related to developing harmonious relationships and forging understanding and unity" and "forming expectations of people in the process of social interaction" (Mangubat, 2008, p. 145). It is rooted in the expectation of honesty, respect, and a sense of *kapwa*, i.e., "*pag may tiwala sa kapwa, alam mong tapat sa iyo ang isang tao—hindi siya nagsisinungaling at nanloloko o kaya nanlalamang, nagkakasundo kayo kasi alam mong may malasakit sayo*" (Mangubat, 2008, p. 146); which when loosely translated indicates that "when you trust someone, you know that they are true to you—they do not lie, deceive, or take advantage [of you], and you get along well because you know that they care about you" (translation mine). There is an emphasis on shared expectations, where *tiwala* is associated with "fulfillment of expectations or conformity to one's word . . . expected responsible action resonates with the expectations of dependability of people in social interaction" (Mangubat, 2008, p. 143).

In relation, *tiwala ng kapwa* refers to an "individual's meeting and maintaining expectations which, in turn, facilitate the formation of *pagtitiwala* or reciprocal trust relations" (Mangubat, 2008, p. 145). "*Tiwala*

ng kapwa and *tiwala sa kapwa* [are] interdependent," in that "*magkaugnay yan . . . kung [may] tiwala sa amin, may tiwala rin kami; kung tiwala naman kami, may tiwala rin sa amin*" ("these are intricately linked . . . if they trust in us, we trust in them; if we trust them, they trust us too") (Mangubat, 2008, p. 148; translation mine). This reciprocity underlines how *kapwa* and *tiwala* are two-way, built on the mutual understanding and recognition of each other's humanness and personhood as consistent with Filipino core values and shared identity.

This study expounds on the social construction of Tiwala and explores its application to organisations in disaster contexts, specifically humanitarian INGOs. It documents behaviours that establish, earn, and strengthen Tiwala ("Tiwala-building") and in contrast, behaviours that negate or fragment it ("Tiwala-eroding"). Embedded in the Philippine context, it derives from the "experience, thought, and orientation of the Filipinos, based on the full use of Filipino culture and language" (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). Built upon feminist standpoint theory, it privileges the insight, perspectives, and experiences of women as valuable and valid contributions to knowledge-building (Brooks, 2007), specifically the leaders of local women's organisations in rural communities most at risk of disasters. To find these rural women leaders, the researcher engaged the *Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan* (PKKK, or National Rural Women's Coalition).

PKKK is a local NGO and coalition of 326 rural women organisations from over 32 provinces in the Philippines, comprised of "small farmers, fishers, agricultural workers, indigenous women, and workers in the informal economy working towards the elimination of discrimination, violence and poverty, and contributing to a strengthened women's movement" through "[the] creation of an enabling policy environment for the fulfilment and protection of rural women's rights" (PKKK, 2023a; PKKK, 2023b). It was first organised in 2003 as a response to the demand for a convention "that would show the strength of the rural women constituency" and "push for the recognition of rural women in the law" (PKKK, 2021), and has since participated in the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and related fora on localisation. One of its core programmes promotes women's rights and resilience in emergencies through

empowerment, solidarity, and advocacy (PKKK, 2023c; CARE, 2021). It is led by a national secretariat that participates in the Philippine humanitarian system and convenes the Women in Emergencies Network (ActionAid, 2023; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2015; Scriven, 2013). PKKK is a good fit for the research given the organisation's feminist identity, focus on rural women's rights-claiming, previous experience and current programming in humanitarian action specifically women's resilience in emergencies, and active involvement in and advocacy of localisation in the Philippine setting.

Data Gathering and Analysis

A feminist qualitative design best achieved the objective and conceptual framework of this study. The research instrument was developed in Tagalog and redesigned after three pretests to improve language and flow. The final version was dependent on the stated preference and perceived comfort of research participants—it incorporated a *kamustahan* and *kwentuhan* format, facilitated in either Tagalog or Taglish. Semistructured interviews, 45 to 60 minutes each, were remotely conducted with 10 rural women leaders selected by PKKK. Participant criteria selected for women that were elected or appointed leaders of their local women's organisations. They personally experienced the household- and community-level impacts of disasters, and directly worked with staff of humanitarian INGOs in disaster response and recovery. They are geographically located in remote and rural communities prone to natural hazards and considered cumulatively "vulnerable" by humanitarian impact standards.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was adapted to the feminist approach of recognising research participants as people, not data sets. Stories and meanings were not reduced to one-line "data extracts" before coding, but were kept intact to preserve context and voice with minimal revisions for brevity or clarity. A semantic interpretation was employed to capture the spirit of the quotes and cadence of storytelling, including candid moments when the women laughed or cried. Codes and themes were manually generated, and an openness principle was maintained in coding and recoding processes.

The study abides by ethics on confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent. Data are not linked with donors or organisations, and exact locations are withheld when politically sensitive. Names of projects and any identifying physical or social characteristics of INGO or donor staff are redacted. Limitations include: English translations strive to encapsulate Filipino concepts with no equivalent interpretation, conversational rapport is limited by the medium of video and phone calls, and rural participants' access to technology is uneven. A communications stipend was provided to control for this factor.

Profile and Context of Research Participants

Rural women leaders take multiple, intersecting roles in their families, communities, and women's associations. When asked to freely introduce themselves, research participants started with a warm greeting before stating their name, identity as a leader, age, where they are from or where they currently live, identity as mother and/or spouse, and affiliation with the women's group or association in their area, before enumerating their paid economic roles and/or unpaid care and domestic work roles. Those that chose to disclose their age are in their early 20s to late 60s. Their self-identified roles outside of PKKK are as student, teacher, daycare worker, barangay officer, barangay councillor, *mananahi* (weaver), *maybahay* (homemaker), and civil engineer, among others. Women assumed multiple leadership roles across different organisations, and considered their membership in PKKK as distinct from their membership in their own local organisations.

The women of this study hail from Ragay municipality in Camarines Sur province; Salcedo in Eastern Samar; Basey in Samar; Biliran in Biliran; and Candoni, Ilog, and Kabankalan City in Negros Occidental. In these communities, some agricultural or coastal barangays are so remote and public transportation is scarce, unavailable, or too expensive, making schools and hospitals routinely inaccessible. Mobile phone and internet signal are weak and intermittent, so much so that to secure audio connection for these interviews, some of the respondents had to walk to their neighbours' houses or travel 45 minutes by jeep or *habal* (motorcycle) to the town

centre. Consistently, the physical infrastructures and social services to address these disadvantages are inadequate.

These disadvantages are exacerbated in times of disasters, which in this research span almost 9 years of rural women's lived experience and insight on disaster onset, response, and recovery. The rural women's institutional memory of their communities' and organisations' history in disasters was incredibly rich. They could recount, in precise detail, the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic in the first phase of nationwide lockdowns from March 2020 to January 2021 (Balite et al., 2021; Gepte et al., 2020), and the events immediately preceding a typhoon landfall from 10 years ago.

The Philippine typhoons they discussed in this study include:

1. Yolanda (Haiyan): Category 5 supertyphoon, 6–9 November 2013, Eastern Samar
2. Urduja (Kai-tak): Tropical storm, 16–19 December 2017, Biliran
3. Ursula (Phanfone): Category 3 typhoon, 23–26 December 2019, Biliran
4. Quinta (Molave): Category 3 typhoon, 23–26 October 2020, Camarines Sur
5. Rolly (Goni): Category 5 supertyphoon, 29 October–3 November 2020, Camarines Sur
6. Ulysses (Vamco): Category 4 typhoon, 8–13 November 2020, Camarines Sur
7. Rai (Odette): Category 5 supertyphoon, 14–18 December 2021, Negros Occidental

The women referred to typhoons by their Philippine names with estimates of month or year. Internationally designated names (in parentheses), official durations in the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR), and Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale (SSHWS) rating based on "a hurricane's sustained wind speed and estimates potential property damage" (National Hurricane Center & Central Pacific Hurricane Center, 2021) were added in research analysis to illustrate the comparative typhoon intensities from weather scientists' data.

In setting the context, a rural woman describes the seasonal trials of their fishing community:

> When a storm is oncoming, the waves begin to swell. For fisherfolk, this is already a time of hardship, every monsoon season. They say, when the sea growls, so does the fisherman's belly. That is the very first problem that until now is hard to solve.

Consistently, the "scientific" or government-issued assessments of typhoons and COVID-19 were markedly different from the humanitarian impacts that research participants experienced or observed. For instance, Camarines Sur in the Bicol region sustained three consecutive typhoons in late 2020. One of these, Typhoon Ulysses, is not categorised as a "super typhoon", but a rural woman leader disagrees:

> After COVID, three consecutive typhoons hit Bicol. First was Quinta, then Rolly, then the supertyphoon Ulysses. . . . With Ulysses, it wasn't quite announced that it was a "super" typhoon. In our area, it was stronger than Rolly, there were more of us affected [by the typhoon] and the roofs of our houses were blown off. Most of the houses were only made of light materials, and they were totally destroyed.

Another example is Typhoon Odette in December 2021, which was assessed in its final government report as "categorically not among the worst disasters . . . despite being strong in terms of characteristics" (Office of Civil Defense [OCD] & National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council [NDRRMC], 2022). A respondent from the area experienced otherwise:

> In this Odette response, this is the first time we experienced this [large] scale of help distributed to the people here. Our livelihoods and homes here in Negros were damaged so badly, especially in Kabankalan, Ilog, Candoni, the southern part of [Negros] Occidental. . . . [The local government] tried to be prepared, but they weren't really ready either, since it's our first

> time to experience a typhoon this strong. They issued some announcements to prepare [for the incoming typhoon], from the municipal and the city government, but most people weren't aware what this Signal No. 3 [truly] meant. They weren't able to anticipate that the typhoon would be this strong, [that it would hit us like this].

What is common with these disasters is that their intensity and impact necessitated the coordinated emergency responses that involved the rural women leaders, PKKK, and humanitarian INGOs.

Findings and Discussion

Illustrations of Philippine International Humanitarian Organisations

Rural women leaders find a value-add to the presence and partnership of INGOs in disaster contexts. Their three reasons are:

Local organisations need INGOs with complementary skills or resources. This perspective is located in a large-scale humanitarian response funded by international organisations or foreign government agencies, where local NGOs are engaged to work in interagency consortia or implement projects that require multilateral coordination and complicated reporting in faster or shorter timelines. A research participant reflects, "We aren't experts yet in humanitarian response . . . we haven't really set up enough systems or mechanisms yet, it seems there's more that can be done." The "systems and mechanisms" are templates for proposal-writing, internal coordination protocols when an emergency alert is raised, emergency preparedness plans including matrices of trained staff assigned to represent the organisation in interagency sectoral meetings, communications and media messages to support resource mobilisation, and/or a range of other coordinated actions in logistics, procurement, finance, and human resources—all set up and ready for deployment in under a week, or in some cases, in under 72 hours. In addition, each "sector" in a humanitarian response (e.g., water sanitation and hygiene, sexual and reproductive health, protection, shelter,

food security and livelihood, education in emergencies, etc.) comes with a different set of implementation guidelines, project indicators, and minimum requirements; and the extent to which they must be followed depends on the donor. Some emergency responses focus on one or two sectors; others, in the experience of our research participants, apply more than three sectors with the same amount of time in which to implement them.

Local organisations do not always have the resources, funding, or staff to meet the demands of foreign donors that determine the complexity of humanitarian actions; meanwhile, INGOs may have one or more of the resources, funding, or staff that local NGOs require to implement a humanitarian response. This is where solidarity-based "partnerships of accompaniment" (CARE, 2022) become valuable, as INGOs and local NGOs with complementing skills and resources work together to address a community's immediate needs postdisaster.

This partnership does not at all mean that local NGOs are "not experts" or "lacking" in humanitarian responses. It is only that the international aid and development system and structure has not yet sufficiently evolved itself to truly be attuned to the needs and realities of local actors. It should not be this hard or this complicated for local (women's) organisations to access funding or resources that are dedicated to saving lives, rebuilding houses, and preparing for anticipated hazards—yet it is taking years for donors and INGOs to achieve key milestones such as harmonised reporting and fiscal transparency. And in its current form in the Philippines, the humanitarian and development sector generally necessitates the existence of INGOs to absorb financial risk, write unwieldy proposals and reports, and manage donor relations.

International organisations possess valued and valuable social capital. Research participants perceive that INGOs possess existing social capital (e.g., connections, technical resources, established trust with foreign donors) that is valuable to PKKK and their women's organisations as one says: "Some funders already trust INGOs *[at] kailangan namin ang* partnership *para ma*-access *ang* fund" ("We need the partnership to access the fund"). This is mostly accurate, as INGOs with a Philippine country

office report to regional and global offices that are active in the policy and advocacy spaces (and by extension, have comparatively better access to the funding pots) of the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the US, Canada, Australia, and more.

A rural woman leader observes:

> An INGO is a connector too. When we say that there's something we need, or there's a project we want to do, they tell us where else we can go and who else we can approach, they connect us to other organisations or people they know.

The linking social capital of INGOs (with donors and UN agencies) is complementary to the linking social capital of local women's organisations (with the community and local government). It expands local women leaders' own social capital too, in that they are able to access the resources (financial, social, material, etc.) that they need because they cultivate an established relationship with an INGO. The illustration is consistent with the multiplier effect or the "networked" nature of social capital, where we are more likely to trust people that our trusted people trust—which in this case is applicable to institutions, as research participants perceive that they are "made" of people too. It is also an example of a partnership of accompaniment done right, where the INGO "closed the loop" and referred out, embodying a Tiwala-building behaviour where they set and met realistic expectations with rural women leaders.

Local governments require support in meeting people's needs during disasters. Eight of 10 research participants said that they found INGOs valuable as local governments may have insufficient funds, resources, or reach. "*Hindi sapat ang pera ng gobyerno para itugon ang kailangan ng* victims *ng kalamidad*" ("The government's budget is not enough to respond to the needs of those affected by this calamity"), one woman leader says. Another notes that in her municipality, disaster preparedness and anticipatory action are inadequate: "*Hindi masyadong* prepared *ang gobyerno sa mga* calamity . . . so *kailangan talaga nila ng* partner *ang* NGO in disasters" ("The government is not very prepared

for a calamity… so they need to partner with NGOs in disasters"), while yet another identifies the funding gap that INGOs can meet: "*Sila* [INGOs] *yung may pondo . . . ang* local women, *kahit may gusto kaming proyekto, wala naman pera o pondo para mapatupad ang mga proyekto*" ("INGOs have the funding . . . we local women, even when we want a project, we do not have the money to implement it").

A rural woman leader illustrates:

> The local government cannot always sustain people's needs, especially in a time of calamity. The limited supply and funds of a community, especially one like ours . . . it cannot address the needs of the people, especially within [the first] 72 hours. So we need to work with NGOs that can support us, so that we can at least shed light on our predicament or hopefully alleviate the hardships that we experience during disasters.
>
> We cannot say that [all] INGOs can [always] provide large portfolios of assistance, but at least our local government would have a partner. An INGO might have larger funds to share, so naturally we continue to coordinate with them during a calamity. If I were to choose, I would rather work with NGOs . . . even after or beyond disasters.

In rural and remote farming and fishing communities, local governments often have limited budgets, staff, and resources with which to implement emergency responses. Predisaster, these communities are already disadvantaged by the systemic social and gender injustices that restrict their rightful access to resources (technological, economic, educational, social, etc.) and disasters exacerbate these intersectional oppressions. Particularly when there are no early warning systems, anticipatory actions, or disaster recovery mechanisms in place—and the typhoon, flood, or drought is of a larger scale or impact—it is more likely that external support becomes necessary. Because these rural areas can be incredibly remote, there were previous disaster experiences when not even the government could reach a particular barangay and only INGOs with resources could access an area, as a woman leader shares: "*Wala kaming*

ibang lokal na makuhanan ng tulong, kaya maganda makipag-ugnayan sa INGO" ("There is no other local [source] where we can get help, so it's good to connect with an INGO").

Related to this is what the research participants identified as a lack of good governance in various levels of local government. Four women from different geographical locations shared separate accounts of political corruption including bribery, cronyism, and nepotism, that caused them to view (and trust) INGOs more favourably in comparison to local government units (LGUs). One woman leader perceives both their barangay and municipal officials as nonconsultative and only tended to favour their own friends or allies:

> If it only depends on our barangay or municipal [government], what happens is only what they want, and not what we want. And only their friends or favourites get to be involved. As for with INGOs, it seems okay, because they listen to any and all suggestions.

Another underlines an appreciation for the (comparatively) nondiscriminatory approach of an INGO in distributing needed resources:

> It's good that there are INGOs to help us during the pandemic, during typhoons and calamities. With the LGUs in our municipality, they will only help you if you voted for them. [INGOs] are not selective with who they help. However you are like, and whether you're a voter or not, you will receive assistance if you need it.

Yet another woman leader recounts a personal experience of government corruption, and the contrast she observed in an INGO's approachability and transparency:

> I have witnessed it myself. Even in our barangay, you cannot hide [the fact] that there is corruption that happens here. Because I was a *purok* president and I also experienced being a victim of corruption from our barangay officials. . . . Nearly all of the people from my district are poor, mostly labourers that work

> with sugarcanes. Then during the typhoon, almost half of my residents were so hungry because their livelihoods were destroyed. So I myself went to the barangay to ask for food for our starving people. After the typhoon, it took 3 days for the barangay to respond. I urged them that this should be an immediate response, but our barangay made too many excuses. So much for being in charge and being the captain. So I told them, these hungry people can no longer wait. . . .
>
> [The INGO] was easier to talk to, and it was easier to make them understand rather than the officials. Because working with INGOs, based on my experience, there is no corruption. Whereas with those in government, there is corruption that occurs. Based on my experience, there is no corruption when working with INGOs. Everything actually gets to the people.

In some contexts, women leaders perceive that INGOs provide better humanitarian support. Consistently, INGOs are valued for behaviours of honesty and reliable quality work, as well as "being the only one to" ("*sila lang*") or "being first to" ("*sila ang una*") access hard-to-reach communities and provide the support they prioritise postdisaster. One woman remembers:

> What happened with us during the typhoon, food first arrived from NGOs, not our barangay. . . . What INGOs provided was better compared to our barangay. For one, our barangay only distributed sardines, noodles, and two kilos of rice. On the other hand, NGOs gave half a sack of rice, as well as canned goods like meatloaf, *karne norte*, and the like. In other words, the assistance that INGOs provided was more valuable than that of our barangay.

The impact of "immediate and life-saving" humanitarian assistance is again illustrated on an individual level . . .

> The INGOs were a big help to us. Firstly with training, with livelihood, and with addressing the priorities and immediate

> needs of women. At the time, I myself experienced having only one pair of underwear because all of my belongings were washed out by Typhoon Yolanda. It was only when PKKK arrived that I was finally able to change my underwear. At night I would have to wash it by hand, then wear it again the very next day.

. . . and on a household and community level:

> For instance, the food packs. The LGU distributed maybe a few kilos, five kilos of rice and a few canned goods. As for the [INGO] and PKKK, they provided at least one sack of rice. The food packs we provided were enough to last a month for five members of a household.

It makes sense that in times of calamity, people would look to the duty-bearers—those within their community that have the mandate to respond—and hold them accountable. It also makes sense that, as members of a women's rights coalition, the research participants would enlist a rights-claiming framework, and therefore decry blatant incidents of government corruption or insufficiency that affect their access to immediately-needed resources postdisaster. In the end, what the women had arrived at through their illustrations is the very core and purpose of NGOs in humanitarian and development work: they exist to provide much-needed support to crisis-affected communities when governments cannot (or can, but cannot do so on their own).

What the women illustrate here is not simplistically a "failure" of government; arguably, localised political corruption is merely a symptom of wider social injustice, and in contexts where LGUs are active, noncorrupt, and trusted, it would still be a priority for local women's organisations to sustain good relationships with their local government representatives. But more so in barangays and municipalities where LGUs are defunct, corrupt, and not trusted, strong vertical ties with INGOs become essential to local women's organisations in disaster response and recovery. It is only this linking social capital that could support them in overcoming systemic and systematic barriers to their communities' resilience. In the Filipino context, a key element of this linking social capital is Tiwala.

Social Constructions of Tiwala in Disasters

Although all research participants affirmed that they do trust INGOs ("*Oo, nagtitiwala ako*"), three of them included qualifiers to this, such as "*Hindi [ako/kami] agad-agad nagtitiwala*" ("I don't trust [people] so easily") or "*Oo, pero hindi lang* 100% *[na tiwala]*" ("Yes [I trust them], but not 100%"). Rural women leaders concede that in the unique and specific context of a disaster, there is almost a necessity to trust, even when they are personally not inclined to quickly or fully trust persons or organisations.

As one respondent articulates:

> With us, the locals here, we do not trust easily. But when it comes to disasters, of course .... When they say they can help, whether they are a foreigner or a stranger [to you], well, you'd have to trust them because you are the one in need.

What makes humanitarian settings unique is the compromising situation that crisis-affected local women find themselves in—they have to suspend their usual standards of trust because institutions have access to the resources they immediately need, but cannot access through supposedly available means (e.g., local government). More than that, humanitarian INGOs essentially have the decision-making power to determine where, how, and to whom these resources are distributed—particularly in areas where the disaster is of a larger scale and local government is overwhelmed to the point of being unable to fulfil this facilitation role—which is why local feminist organisations are (and should be) keen on ensuring that this decision-making is not unilateral. In any emergency response model, the approach is meant to be participatory, community-centred, and locally-led, even (and especially) when processes are routinely shortened by urgency.

Even then, rural women perceive that from the beginning, the power dynamic is inherently uneven and disadvantageous to them. "*Eh talagang pagkakatiwalaan mo kasi ikaw nangangailangan*" ("Well, you'd have to trust [them] because you're the one in need"), indicating that their choice in the matter is specifically limited by the disaster context and the strength

(or weakness) of their linking social capital. It is therefore within the mandate and interest of INGOs to make sustained efforts in correcting this imbalance by meaningfully examining and systemically incorporating rural women's informed insight in emergencies.

As such, how rural women leaders socially construct Tiwala in or with INGOs is of value to the Philippine humanitarian and development space. When asked how they trust INGOs, rural women leaders draw from the following:

Externally-supported credibility. The legal status or accreditation of an INGO, the staff they employ, and the donors that support them are perceived as important in establishing Tiwala. This is consistent with the cumulative and compounding nature of Trust, wherein women leaders indicate they are more likely to trust persons or organisations that they perceive are "trusted" as well by institutions seen as legitimate by legal standards or processes. More than official papers, accessible external sources such as the internet and social media are perceived as valid reference checks.

The advocacy and previous work of INGOs are also valued, with a bias for what women themselves tangibly "see" or observe. Externally-facing products are by themselves insufficient as a slightly more subjective judgment is exercised, as with this respondent's personal vetting process:

> Based on their background and on what they do, because these days you can easily find them on the internet and check. So with their previous work, and with what they did for us, you can see what their advocacy is and whether they help sincerely or if it's just for show.

Finally, the strongest endorsement of an INGO's credibility remains to be the explicit support and partnership with a local organisation known to, and already trusted by, the community and the rural women leaders, in this case PKKK: "They were able to gain my trust, maybe because of PKKK. It was PKKK National who facilitated the turnover, and told us that this will be our partner. It was PKKK who introduced them to us as partner." These surface-level bases for Tiwala can be located

"preemergency"—that is, a solid donor, project, and partner portfolio communicated effectively through social media channels is helpful to INGOs in establishing initial credibility.

Behaviours that exhibit trustworthiness. When INGOs do what they say they will do, rural women leaders are more likely to trust them. In the Typhoon Odette response in Negros Occidental, three of four respondents highly valued behaviours that had to do with "promise-keeping." One woman shares:

> Everything they gave us, they gave us sincerely. [They] did what they said they would do, they were able to give what they said they would give. So for me, I trust this [INGO]. They kept their promise to us. It was there, they provided what really was within the budget for each project. Whatever was needed . . . they did what they committed to us.

"*Natupad lahat ng sinabi nila*" ("[They] did what they said they would do" or "What they said will happen, happened") and "*Tinutupad nila yung promisa nila sa amin*" ("They kept their promise to us") demonstrate a fulfilment of set expectations, a basis of Tiwala. Where the first statement can be examined objectively—that is, one can verify the completion or noncompletion of a project against its indicators or outcomes—the second carries an affective connotation that is more subjective.

Consistently, respondents construct Tiwala and evaluate "fulfilled expectations" based on what they personally observe and experience:

> Because you can really see, and we have personally experienced, that they do what they say they will. For instance, when they said they will assist [you], you can just call or message them if you have a question and sometimes the response is delayed, but at least they respond.

And when a previous expectation is satisfactorily met, it sets the groundwork for succeeding instances where Tiwala is required: "During the orientation, we had already decided. Even then, we had complete trust in them, that they would fulfil their commitment of providing livelihoods

for us. So for us, when the funds arrived, we did not doubt them anymore." Research participants would say, "*Buo ang paniniwala namin*" ("Our belief [in them] is whole") or "*Hindi buo ang tiwala [ko]*" ("My belief is not absolute"), which illustrates how Tiwala is not static or zero-sum, and it is not hierarchical, top-down, or "levelled". The recurrence of "*buo*" ("wholeness," "fullness") as a descriptor of Tiwala (and "*paniniwala*," a related but deeper concept more often associated with "faith") is also of interest as it is related to—but distinctly different from—the "levels" of Trust identified in the literature. One does not climb up or down a metaphorical staircase while earning or eroding Tiwala; it is a fluid movement towards a "wholeness" of Tiwala or a fragmentation of it. A woman leader illustrates such a situation where an INGO exhibits behaviour that fragments, or erodes, Tiwala:

> With large funders like this, they should be transparent with the people that they are helping . . . . Other INGOs, they just use these documents, take pictures of us, do interviews that they send to the funder. They take advantage of the people . . . and then [the help] doesn't really reach us. For example a funder sends PhP100, and they use our name, they use our picture . . . the funder sent [PhP]100 and what we receive is PhP20. That hurts. So for them to truly earn our trust, they should be transparent with what they receive from funders [and what we then receive].

These incidents are unfortunately not uncommon. Withholding transparency is an act of being dishonest, which is contrary to fostering trust. It is within INGOs' interest and mandate to heed this call and fortify a system and culture of transparency internally and externally.

Being as collaborative and participatory as possible across the phases of the emergency response is more likely to engender Tiwala. Research participants repeatedly made use of the statements "*kasama kami*" ("We were included") and "*magkasama kami*" ("We were together") in a positive tone, indicating that they valued the togetherness and partnered approach even from the project inception stage:

> The reason I trust the [INGO] is because they also include our ideas, not everything comes from them. We plan together, and we implement together. At the start of the implementation they were there, but later on, it was already us implementing the project.

Facilitating a healthy space and process where women leaders concretely see that their ideas are heard and included is crucial in cocreation, and this side-by-side planning consequently led to their ownership and mastery of the project.

In Negros Occidental and Samar, women leaders appreciated the needs assessments that INGOs conducted: "They did a survey on what women really need, and what our priorities were, so we were part of the planning. So that time we have seen that they are serious in helping [us], because they consulted us first." Surveys that assess the immediate needs and priorities of crisis-affected communities entail meaningful consultation, and when done effectively, ensure that aid is appropriate and that people in need have a say and participation in the project. "*Nakita namin na ang pagtulong nila ay hindi basta-basta*" ("We saw that their help was meaningful") contributed to Tiwala-building, as this is juxtaposed with previous experiences of other INGO staff exhibiting Tiwala-eroding behaviours (e.g., distributing aid that is not context-appropriate, taking photos and interviews of communities without consent, demonstrating insincerity).

Physical and visible presence continues to be valued by women leaders, particularly in monitoring impact after the conclusion of a project: "I trust them because they are here. They monitor how their assistance was helpful, how people made use of the assistance provided to them." Women leaders are acutely aware of, and more likely to trust, organisations that maintain correspondence beyond the parameters of a project timeline. And these mechanisms for clear communication are consistently important across the project cycle, with a preference for higher frequency, transparency, and involvement of local NGOs.

Finally, being timely, approachable, and sincere contributes to rural women's Tiwala in INGOs. A research participant quantifies this sincerity

as a general "*Walang hinihinging kapalit, walang ginagawang masama*" ("[They are] not asking for anything in return, not doing anything wrong"), while another illustrates a specific *kamustahan* behaviour: "Yes, because they seem genuinely concerned. For example, if the rains are strong [now], they'll ask us how we are, how the rains are, and how our organisation is doing." Timeliness—or alternatively, reliability—and approachability are also key contributors in Tiwala-building for institutions involved in disaster response. A woman leader illustrates:

> It is easy to ask them for help. That is really what we saw. . . . They are immediately there. After a calamity, here they are. After the pandemic, here they are. They are the first to give soap, then after three typhoons [hit], here they are again. They immediately gave livelihood projects that even until now we benefit from.

A slow or late emergency response renders itself obsolete—its very purpose is to meet the stated need for "immediate and life-saving assistance." In the same vein of "meeting set expectations," rural women in disaster contexts are more likely to trust institutions that fulfil their advertised purpose.

Sense of mutuality and reciprocity. Rural women leaders respond positively to the sense (and observation of supporting behaviours) that trust is placed in them, and they express a willingness to reciprocate this trust. Another woman leader underlines the importance of mutual trust, and suggests that institutional trust is necessary in proper project implementation postdisaster: "*Kasi pag hindi ka rin nagtitiwala sa isang organisasyon, wala ring mangyayari*" ("Because if you don't trust an organisation, nothing will happen").

These first three categories ("Externally-supported credibility," "Behaviours that exhibit trustworthiness," and "Sense of mutuality and reciprocity") are "anticipated" themes that already fit into previous social constructions of Tiwala (Mangubat, 2008) and other Trust constructions in the literature. For instance, "Sense of mutuality and reciprocity" is present in Mangubat's framework, named "Shared expectations." The fourth "Perceptions of positive impact" could be viewed as cross-cutting, as some responses could arguably fit into the previous three (most closely with

"Sense of mutuality and reciprocity"). Yet the researcher was compelled to separate these into a fourth category due to the frequency of this response across geographical locations and disaster context—indicating an uncoordinated yet consensual "valuing" of this category by the women leaders.

Perceptions of positive impact. Seven of 10 ten research participants identified "*malaking tulong*" ("a huge help") and its variations as a reason for trusting an INGO. This is consistent with Mangubat's (2008) study where respondents associated Tiwala with the behaviour of "helping in a time of need" ("*pagtulong*"/"*pagdamay*"), and in this research the attribution of *malaking tulong* is to organisations, not just individuals.

An anticipated "first level" is a personal experience of receiving help. The "second level" increases in scope and scale, from an individual to a community benefit. Remote methods of INGO support for early warning systems are perceived as "a huge help" in preparedness, as in the experience of a woman leader who received regular text messages of weather updates from INGO staff, prior to the anticipated landfall of a typhoon: "*Malaking tulong yung mga* update *nila [sa bagyo]*" ("Their typhoon updates are a huge help").

In Negros Occidental, a rural woman recounts the impact of consecutive and considerable support in the wake of another typhoon:

> They said they will offer only a little support. Turns out it wasn't just once, and they extended more and more assistance. Towards the end, people really felt the impact of their help, which amounted to more than just one or two cans of sardines or a few kilos of rice. And the beneficiaries could truly feel the impact of their assistance.

In this illustration, she refers to quality (and perhaps even size) of support and how this impact is "felt" by beneficiaries (her word). What can be deduced from this is the converse: there is help or support that is not felt by or not impactful to the people receiving them; and there is help that is ultimately unhelpful, which is not uncommon when humanitarian responses are haphazardly implemented.

Most of the research participants named food, nonfood items, and disaster preparedness support as "helpful," but large grants and emergency livelihoods—that is, cash and economic assistance—continue to be the interventions that they more frequently perceive as "impactful" and correlate with feelings of trust. In Samar, a woman leader recounts: "The [INGO] provided livelihoods here, and it was very much a huge amount. So I can really say that [our] trust in each other is truly compact." *Compact* here is meant as solid, sturdy, or dense; something that has already coalesced, evidenced by the sense of mutuality that recurs here. There is not a specific monetary amount for what would constitute a "large" grant; instead, women leaders construct this in context, dependent on factors such as the scale of devastation wrought by a typhoon and the capacity (or limited capacity) of the community to seek help elsewhere or by other means.

What is common in the women's perceptions of positive impact is sustainability. The priorities and needs of a crisis-affected community are not fixed in the course of a humanitarian emergency, hence the traditional delineations of "disaster response," "disaster recovery," and the cycling back (or more accurately, forward) to "disaster preparedness." Although it is true—and the research participants affirm through their accounts—that food, water, and nonfood items (such as construction materials for rebuilding houses) are the priority in the first few days and weeks of a supertyphoon, as the crises are protracted to months or even years, the priorities shift to income-generating and community-building interventions that ensure the communities are able to carry on once INGOs conclude a project and leave the area.

Therefore, what women leaders value as "more impactful" are comprehensive and multisectoral humanitarian responses that strengthen their resilience to future disasters in sustainable ways, and that connect to their longer-term community development as supported by local NGOs and government—and they are more likely to trust INGOs that adopt this approach. As one woman puts simply: "*[May tiwala ako sa kanila dahil] sila ang may pinakamalaking naibahagi [na tulong]*" ("I trust them because they have helped us the most").

For INGOs to establish Tiwala with local women's organisations, their approach must be built on sincerity and quality work, as a rural woman leader describes:

> If they [want to] help, first and foremost, give what is appropriate and what people really need. . . . And with programs, what they [say they will] implement, that's what should happen. . . . These projects that they start, they shouldn't just leave them hanging. For example, they'd set up a water system, but there isn't any water [line]. How would that be useful to us? They should finish what they start, so they can really show their sincerity.

The anecdote notes a failure in sustainability mechanisms; when an intervention does not serve its intended purpose, it runs the risk of negating the "do no harm" principle. When an INGO starts initiatives that they do not finish, they leave cause for the erosion of Trust with the community.

Women leaders call for honest work, and dignified humanitarian assistance. What they perceive as "dignified" are interventions or aid that are what people need, and are fit for their skills, training, and environment. A research participant tells a compelling story of aid gone wrong:

> [We want] genuine leadership, honest service, so that we can also attain what is truly due to us. Because I've observed INGOs before that distributed boats to people who lived in the mountains . . . what would they do with that? They handed out boats to highlanders, fisheries when they aren't fisherfolk. . . . And what does that do? What [the people] did, they repurposed the boats into plant boxes. . . . Because [the INGOs] didn't do it right. They were too much in a hurry to only hand out what they wanted, which was not even appropriate to those they were giving it to, it isn't what they needed. [True service is] being fit-for-purpose, being apt to what people need, that's the cue one should take. That is my experience with other INGOs. They don't need for their projects to be sustainable, no. What's important to them is they tick a box, and then let [the people] deal with it.

Women leaders express that they would more likely trust INGOs that help in helpful ways. When work is done haphazardly without consulting local communities, the consequences are borne not by INGOs but the communities themselves. In this account, rural farmers exercised creativity in transforming equipment they do not need or cannot use, an attitude that is characteristic of Filipino resilience strategies; but as this woman leader succinctly states, this should not be the case in the first place, and INGOs' objective must be towards project suitability and sustainability. In addition:

> Do their work well, and work with us. . . . There are INGOs that [just] distribute [aid] but it doesn't go to those who truly must receive help. There aren't any orientations or at least training [to let us know that]—here is what we're distributing, here is how we help. Because it isn't just the material [resources], they can also impart knowledge or training for people. Some [NGOs] they would hold a distribution [activity] and call it a day, without verifying if it reached the right people. That's how I say it isn't honest work.

The emphasis on investments in human capital ("training," or knowledge-building and skills development) being no less valuable than economic capital underlines the value that women leaders place on holistic perspectives in "providing quality services" or "providing aid that is apt" in postdisaster settings.

Across the responses it can be noted that Tiwala in organisations is largely evidence-based and in fact hinged on behaviour. Women leaders are affective towards the people in these international organisations but they are rational towards the organisation itself. Their constructions of organisational or "institutional" Trust are behaviour-based in that their narratives of Tiwala are characterised by frequent or repeated patterns (i.e., "this is what they do consistently" or "this is what they have done before, and that is why I say that I trust them"). For instance, being true to one's word is both a behaviour and a quality, and central to the construct and concept of Tiwala. Women leaders value this as

it relates not just to sincerity but to integrity as well; persons that are true to their word do what they say they would, and exhibit characteristics of reliability, steadiness, and trustworthiness. As a research participant explains: "What they promise, they must actually keep. We women leaders would give 100% to our volunteerism. . . . When we see that the one helping is sincere too . . . . It really is different when promises are made [and kept]." What rural women leaders ask is the recognition of their voice within this vertical social relation: "Listen to leaders, or women, or the community that are here. Please don't be like the others who come here only to distribute [aid] . . . but don't really know or care who it really is that they reach." That the call to "listen to us" continues to be salient only illustrates how it still is not happening enough. The call for a process with meaningful consultations anchored on values of sincerity and honesty and a locally-centred, locally-led response is clear, not with an absolute turnover of responsibilities to crisis-affected communities or women's groups that inflate their multiple burdens, but an equitable partnership in decision-making. A respondent concludes:

> As a woman leader, what we ask is always the same. What I'd like is that they come to us, see how we live in the countryside, understand what is happening to us. . . . What we want is for them to see our situation, to grasp the full reality of what we really need.

From their illustrations and social constructions of Tiwala with INGOs, rural women leaders described the quality and nature of (equitable) relations and (dignified) humanitarian assistance that they know is due to them and their communities. Rural women leaders are confident in their own sincerity, their own qualities and behaviours of Tiwala-building, their openness to build partnerships; and they seek like-minded and like-hearted individuals in INGOs in the objective of making their communities more resilient to disasters.

Conclusions

Centring Local Women's Organisations and Tiwala in Disaster Resilience

The traditional humanitarian system is designed in favour of international actors, as the people and partners that INGOs trust are more likely to receive funding or food first. But what of the people and partners that local actors trust? The colonial history of the humanitarian sector, the global socioeconomic disparity that exacerbates the devastating impacts of natural hazards to already-vulnerable rural communities, and the gender norms that systematically deprioritise local women's organisations even with the vibrant characteristic of local civil society in the country—disadvantages local women's organisations by default.

Centring local women's organisations and Tiwala in disaster resilience offers valuable qualitative evidence for equitable partnerships and locally-led humanitarian responses. Currently, Tiwala is either absent or deprioritised in disaster resilience models and approaches (even ones that incorporate gender). Yet this study finds that Tiwala can be a tool to fortify the linking social capital of local women's organisations with humanitarian INGOs to consequently strengthen their communities' resilience to drivers of risk in disasters. The objective of establishing and fostering Tiwala with local community-based organisations as opposed solely to achieving maximum efficiency and effectiveness in disaster response projects—could be a feminist approach that brings back and enhances the "humanity" in humanitarian action, reiterates the spirit of connecting meaningfully with people, and allows room for joy, fellowship, kindness, and solidarity. Organised women perceive that they do not get to choose what INGOs to accept aid from, nor do they get to choose what foreign governments fund the water systems or *sari-sari* stores they need to recover from a supertyphoon; and their common perspective is that "something is better than nothing," or that this something is better than what they had usually received. Yet through the sharing of their humanitarian partnership experiences and social constructions of Tiwala, the rural women leaders of PKKK affirm that they are well aware that

they must get to choose how this aid is delivered, what role they play in this delivery, and when to hold institutional actors accountable. If the international humanitarian system is serious about its commitment to decolonialise and localise the sector, then they would do well to heed what local actors and local women say. And particularly in the rural Philippines, they would do well to hold themselves to account, and aspire to become institutions that local women trust.

Rural women leaders still perceive a clear and present need for INGOs in disaster settings, provided that INGOs collaborate meaningfully with local civil society and community-based women's organisations. Although there continue to be debates around the precise definition and principles of "equitable partnership" (Price et al., 2020) particularly in the reform of the humanitarian sector (Charter for Change, 2021), in the Philippine setting it is broadly understood as built "on the basis of shared values and accountability between partners, upholding the principles of partnership based on equality, mutual understanding, transparency, participation, [and] shared responsibilities" (Sumayo-Pearlman & Patel, 2021) and is acknowledged as central to ensuring locally-led action in humanitarian work (CARE, 2022; Oxfam, 2021). This is evidence to support the global campaign of equitable partnerships in the humanitarian system, specifically in rural poor communities in Camarines Sur, Samar, Eastern Samar, Biliran, and Negros Occidental where there already exist vibrant local women's organisations that have a history of acting as first responders and emergency frontliners to the devastating impacts of typhoons. Rural women leaders are experts of their disaster contexts, and their clarion call is a humanitarian and development system that is Filipino and feminist in nature and praxis: a way onwards that is built upon their lived experiences of navigating their linking social capital with formal institutions, rooted in a culture of mutual Tiwala, and anchored by their holistic and rights-based approach to women's empowerment and community resilience to disasters.

This study provides crucial insight in partnerships for local NGOs in humanitarian action and development work, though its practical applications may differ. For instance, to say that we place Tiwala as central to equitable partnership approaches might not even be necessary in some

organisations; because it is so central to our *pakikisama* and relationship-building, we do not have a blueprint or process for it. We simply have an inclination for what behaviours build Trust and which do not. Several Filipino NGOs (and INGOs with staff intimately familiar with Filipino culture) are already centring trust-building in their partnership-building, but it is still crucial to strengthen this work by clearly communicating and managing expectations better, improving coordination mechanisms, and systematically ensuring that community-based approaches are not unintentionally overlooked in the stressful or high-adrenaline situations of emergencies.

On the other hand, it can be useful for organisations that are only starting out with partnership-building in the Philippines. The study offers a perspective of the shape and form that locally-led action takes in this country, while placing women at the centre and underlining the role that INGOs must take. Particularly if the organisational structure is lean and nearly all country office staff are expected to engage in relationship-building with local NGO partners, an understanding of Tiwala attitudes and behaviours—and the ways that community leaders navigate it—is worthwhile. Furthermore, individual and institutional Tiwala can be a metric or indicator in the quality of partnerships in evaluating whether or not, or the extents to which, humanitarian partnerships are equitable. Especially since the Philippines anticipates seasonal typhoons every year, the challenge and opportunity is for Philippine INGOs to (re)examine their specific position and value-add in the communities they work in and the local NGOs they work with, and understand the power and relevance of local women's organisations in emergencies.

A pathway to strengthening disaster resilience is investing in women leaders of local women's organisations and their social capital with formal institutions in the humanitarian system. To factor Tiwala into emergency responses or partnership relations is an important element in moving towards a feminist Filipino humanitarian system, en route to the larger objective of achieving social and gender justice.

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