



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Humanitarian Aid
and Civil Protection

EU Ambassador lauds fishing communities' sustainable rehabilitation efforts

Leyte, 21 October 2014—Ambassador Guy Ledoux of the European Union (EU) has lauded the fisherfolks of Abuyog, commending them for their remarkable resilience, particularly in playing their part in community-based rehabilitation efforts in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda), during a field visit to the typhoon-ravaged community today.

Ambassador Ledoux was joined by Czech Ambassador Jaroslav Olša, Jr., FAO Representative to the Philippines José Luis Fernandez and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Regional Director Juan Albaladejo in his visit to this municipality.

"It is rewarding to see how the fisherfolks have become more empowered one year after Typhoon Haiyan. I hope that the local communities sustain the hardwork and collaboration to ensure that Abuyog will become more self-reliant. Recovery is, indeed, possible when combined efforts are focused on a common objective," Ambassador Ledoux said.

"Throughout FAO's intervention, emphasis is put on ensuring that fisheries-based livelihoods are restored in a way that is meaningful, sustainable and builds resilience to natural disasters", said Fernandez, after thanking the support FAO received from the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) of the EU.

"The rehabilitation process of the fisheries sector presents the opportunity to introduce improved practices to contribute to more resilient livelihoods," Fernandez further said.

The EU has provided € 1.5 million (USD 1.9 million) for fisherfolks affected by typhoon Haiyan.

Under this EU ECHO-funded project, the provision of boat engines to some 1 700 fishers is just one of the steps leading to the rehabilitation of fishing communities' livelihoods.

In ensuring people's livelihoods in affected regions, the project's activities and appropriate inputs were identified in close collaboration with fisheries communities, through village consultations and individual household visits.

Stressing the importance of FAO's commitment to Accountability to Affected Populations principles, Fernandez emphasized that "community-based participatory processes are essential to a successful recovery program—they help improve the appropriateness of the humanitarian response by identifying priority needs and ensuring that local capacities are taken into account."

In addition to the boat engines, FAO—with the support from the EU —will provide 3 000 fishers with material to mend or replace their lost fishing gear, 1 000 women with training in fish-processing, storage, and conservation to diversify their livelihood, and assist 1 000 seaweed farmers with materials and technical capacity-building to restore seaweed farms. Further, 10 marine-protected areas are being rehabilitated with BFAR's assistance.

When Typhoon Haiyan struck the country almost a year ago, tens of thousands of fishers lost their livelihoods, needing urgent support. The EU-funded project is part of a USD 8 Million FAO intervention which aims to support a total of 20 100 affected people working in the fisheries sector thanks to the concerted contributions of the EU, Germany and the United Kingdom. All efforts are in close collaboration with BFAR, covering the regions of Eastern Visayas, Western Visayas and Northern Palawan.

About FAO's Haiyan Response

FAO Philippines has been implementing 22 projects directly in response to Typhoon Haiyan, benefitting some 150 000 of the most vulnerable agricultural and fisheries communities. Thanks to donor support of USD 39.7 million, FAO is providing assistance in four critical areas of intervention: rice and corn farming; fisheries and coastal communities; coconut-based farming systems; and coastal/mangrove forest rehabilitation. A key component of all FAO's ongoing interventions is resilience-building and laying the ground work for sustainable development through the integration of the Accountability to Affected Populations into all programmes.

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