



# PROJECT PITIK

Overcoming the Nightmares of Fisherfolk's  
Children in Typhoon Belt Rural Philippines

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those who contributed to the successful implementation of Project Pitik: Overcoming the Nightmares of Fisherfolk's Children in Typhoon Belt Rural Philippines.

First and foremost, we extend special thanks to our funding partner, Southeast Asia Junction, whose generous support made Project Pitik possible. Your investment in this initiative has enabled us to empower vulnerable children to cope with the challenges of typhoons through the transformative power of art and storytelling.

We thank the fisherfolk's children of Tabugon, Liloan, Southern Leyte, whose unwavering enthusiasm and participation were the driving force behind this endeavor. Your courage in sharing your stories through mobile photography has illuminated a path towards healing and resilience.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the fishing community of Tabugon for their invaluable participation and support in Project Pitik. Your unwavering commitment to the well-being of your children and your participation in the different activities have been instrumental in the success of this project.

We express our sincere appreciation to the community leaders of Tabugon who supported the project activities, ensuring that Project Pitik reached its intended audience and had a meaningful impact on the lives of participants.

We are grateful to Southern Leyte State University for the invaluable support throughout the implementation of the project. The institution's dedication to community engagement and educational excellence has been instrumental in the success of this initiative. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the personnel of the Research, Innovation, and Extension Services Office who generously contributed their time, expertise, and resources to make this project possible.

Last but not least, we acknowledge the broader community of advocates and stakeholders who have championed the cause of disaster resiliency and mental health support. Your commitment to building a more resilient and compassionate society inspires us to continue our work in empowering marginalized communities.

Together, we have made a difference in the lives of fisherfolk's children, helping them to find strength, resilience, and hope amidst adversity. As we reflect on the success of Project Pitik, we are reminded of the collective power of collaboration, empathy, and creativity in overcoming the nightmares of the past and forging a brighter future for all.

Your resilience in the face of adversity serves as an inspiration to us all. Thank you for opening your hearts and homes to us, and for being partners in our journey towards building a more resilient and compassionate community.

With gratitude,

Rey G. Comabig, et al.

## RATIONALE

Annually, the Philippines is visited by an average of 20 typhoons [1] and Eastern Visayas is one of the hardest-hit regions [2]. In fact, Super Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda), the strongest typhoon ever recorded, made landfall in Tacloban City, Leyte [3]. Years after, another destructive typhoon, Super Typhoon Rai (Odette), made a third landfall in Liloan, Southern Leyte [4]. Both of these typhoons caused the loss of lives and properties in the region, especially the coastal communities [3][5]. Aside from that, it also caused mental health challenges to survivors particularly the most vulnerable group—the children [6]. Despite the years that passed, many young survivors could still feel the lasting effects of the previous typhoons. Young survivors expressed that they had trouble falling asleep or staying asleep after the typhoon. Whenever there is news about an imminent typhoon, they will feel distressed knowing that the typhoons are getting stronger each year due to the effects of climate change. This conforms to previous research findings that after a disaster, children experience post-traumatic stress symptoms such as recurring thoughts about the disaster, hypervigilance, or difficulty sleeping or concentrating [7]. Moreover, typhoons during the pandemic led to increasing figures of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) within a population that already had high mental health problems [8]. Yet, this can be addressed and one of the ways is the use of photography being a tool in art therapy within the realm of expressive therapies that can be used for wellness purposes [9]. Hence, “Project Pitik: Overcoming the Nightmares of Fisherfolk’s Children in Typhoon Belt Rural Philippines” was conducted. This project was conducted in Tabugon, Liloan, Southern Leyte, a fishing community in rural Philippines that is annually affected by different typhoons and had experience with typhoons amidst the pandemic. Pitik which means to capture images is the core of this project. With this, the fisherfolk’s children underwent a series of activities tailored to upskill them on mobile photography which they can use as a tool to help them express their lived experiences which are tough to put into words. This gradually helps them to be mentally resilient to whatever natural disaster they may experience. On the other hand, the captured images and narratives of the fisherfolk’s children were used as research data to generate a theoretical model of the young survivor’s coping strategies during typhoons which may be of significant use as a basis for policy-making on disaster resiliency.

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## OBJECTIVES

This project generally aimed to introduce and train fisherfolk’s children on mobile photography to cope with their unpleasant experiences during several typhoons. Likewise, this aimed to help them understand the concept of disaster resiliency through their captured images and narratives. Through a research-based approach, this project aimed to identify the unpleasant experiences of fisherfolk’s children during several typhoons during the pandemic through their captured images, classify their coping strategies based on the themes that will be drawn from their narratives, and generate a theoretical model on how the fisherfolk’s children cope with the typhoons amidst the pandemic.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

<b>Activity #: 1</b>	<b>Introduction of the Project and MOA Signing</b>	
Activity Leader:	Rey G. Comabig	
<b>Objective:</b>	This activity aimed to introduce Project Pitik: Overcoming the Nightmares of Fisherfolk’s Children in Typhoon Belt Rural Philippines to the fishing community of Tabugon.	
<b>Learning Outcome:</b>	By the end of the learning experience, the participants would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand what the project is all about</li> <li>• Recognize the Southern Leyte State U’s community engagement initiatives</li> </ul>	
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Discrete Outcomes</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
Introduction of the Project	Understand the rationale, objectives, and significance of the project.	Rey G. Comabig
Preliminaries: Audio-visual presentation Welcome Address: Hon. Marlon P. Galot Statement of Purpose: Mr. Rey G. Comabig Presentation of the Extensionists: Dr. Eda J. Opina MOA Signing Message: Dr. Jude A. Duarte Dr. Francis Ann R. Sy Hon. Nimfa Buna Closing Remarks: Dr. Frederick Aniga Emcee: Dr. Eda J. Opina		

<b>Activity #: 2</b>	<b>Training on Mobile Photography</b>	
Activity Leader:	Rey G. Comabig	
<b>Objective:</b>	This activity aimed to upskill the fisherfolk's children in mobile photography.	
<b>Learning Outcome:</b>	<p>By the end of the learning experience, the participants would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the fundamentals of photography</li> <li>• Apply photo composition techniques in taking photos</li> </ul>	
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Discrete Outcomes</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
Fundamentals of Photography	Define photography. Understand the concepts in photography. Identify the different photo composition techniques. Apply photo composition techniques in taking photos depicting their lived experiences of the previous typhoons.	Rey G. Comabig

<b>Activity #: 3</b>	<b>Training on Storytelling</b>	
Activity Leader:	Eda J. Opina	
<b>Objective:</b>	This activity aimed to upskill the fisherfolk's children in storytelling.	
<b>Learning Outcome:</b>	<p>By the end of the learning experience, the participants would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the fundamentals of storytelling</li> <li>• Apply the storytelling strategies to describe their lived experiences</li> <li>• Tell their lived experiences through stories</li> </ul>	
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Discrete Outcomes</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
Fundamentals of Storytelling	Familiarize the concepts in storytelling. Narrate a compelling story of their lived experiences and coping strategies for the previous typhoons.	Eda J. Opina

<b>Activity #: 4</b>	<b>Counselling Session with Fisherfolk's Children</b>	
Activity Leader:	Rey G. Comabig	
<b>Objective:</b>	This activity aimed to provide psychological support to fisherfolk's children who are super typhoon survivors	
<b>Learning Outcome:</b>	By the end of the learning experience, the participants would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase their understanding of self and the environment</li> <li>• Foster psychological development</li> </ul>	
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Discrete Outcomes</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
Counselling Session	Identify coping strategies and ways to understand self and the environment. Facilitate behavioral change.	Nenita V. Flores

<b>Activity #: 5</b>	<b>Culminating Activity and Awareness Campaign on Climate Change and Its Threat to Children</b>	
Activity Leader:	Rey G. Comabig	
<b>Objective:</b>	This activity aimed to communicate the findings of the project to the fisherfolks community and the local policymakers and to inform and raise awareness of climate change and its threat to children amongst the people (children and their parents) in the identified fishing community.	
<b>Learning Outcome:</b>	By the end of the learning experience, the participants would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize the findings of the project</li> <li>• Increase their awareness of climate change</li> <li>• Identify the impacts of climate change on children</li> </ul>	
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Discrete Outcomes</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
Recommendations for Policy-making	Identify the key findings of the project and proposed sustainable mechanism.	Rey G. Comabig
Climate Change and Children	Familiarize basic concepts about climate change. Recognize the threats of climate change to children.	Mark Donald S. Oja

Preliminaries: Audio-visual presentation  
Welcome Address: Hon. Terencio Dipay  
Messages from Parents  
Messages from Children  
Recommendations for Policy-making: Mr. Rey G. Comabig  
Climate Change and Children: Mr. Mark Donald S. Oja  
Closing Remarks: Mr. Mark Donald S. Oja  
Emcee: Dr. Eda J. Opina

## DETAILS OF THE ACTIVITIES

In response to the unpleasant experience of the children of fishermen in the typhoon-prone area of Tabugon, Liloan, Southern Leyte, Project Pitik was initiated by the Southern Leyte State University through the help of Southeast Asia Junction as part of its community engagement initiatives. Beginning on July 14, 2023, the project aimed to address the psychological distress and trauma resulting from their experiences with super typhoons. Through a series of training sessions, counseling, and culminating activity, Project Pitik sought to empower these children by equipping them with skills in mobile photography, storytelling, and providing much-needed psychological support.

The project commenced with an opening program and the signing of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) on July 14, 2023. This event served as an opportunity to introduce the rationale behind Project Pitik to the fishing community of Tabugon. Through engaging presentations and discussions, the objectives and significance of the project were clearly articulated, raising a sense of understanding and collaboration among the participants.

On July 28, 2023, the first phase of the training program commenced with sessions on mobile photography. Led by a skilled instructor, the children were guided through the fundamentals of photography, including concepts, techniques, and composition. Through hands-on activities and practical exercises, they not only gained proficiency in using mobile devices for photography but also learned to capture and depict their lived experiences of previous typhoons with a new perspective.

Following the photography training, on September 16, 2023, the focus shifted to storytelling. Recognizing the power of narrative in processing and communicating personal experiences, the children were immersed in workshops aimed at honing their storytelling abilities. From understanding the basic elements of storytelling, the participants were empowered to express their emotions and experiences in a structured and meaningful manner.

On October 7, 2023, a crucial component of the project unfolded as counseling sessions were conducted with the children. Facilitated by trained and licensed professionals, these sessions provided a safe and supportive environment for the children to explore and process their emotions related to their experiences with super typhoons. By fostering self-awareness and resilience, the counseling sessions played a pivotal role in the psychological healing and development of the participants.

The culmination of Project Pitik took place on December 7, 2023, with an Awareness Campaign on Climate Change and Its Threat to Children. Bringing together the fishing community and local policymakers, the event served as a platform to disseminate the findings and outcomes of the project. Through presentations and interactive discussions, the participants were informed and educated about the realities of climate change and its impact on vulnerable populations, particularly children living in typhoon-prone areas.

The implementation of Project Pitik yielded significant outcomes and impact on multiple levels. Firstly, the children of fishermen in Tabugon, Liloan, Southern Leyte, acquired valuable skills in mobile photography and storytelling, empowering them to document and share their experiences with resilience and creativity. Secondly, the counseling sessions provided much-needed psychological support, helping the children navigate and cope with the emotional aftermath of super typhoons. Finally, the Awareness Campaign not only raised awareness about climate change but also fostered community engagement and advocacy for the protection of children in vulnerable environments.

Project Pitik stands as a testament to the power of community-driven initiatives in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by vulnerable populations. By equipping children with skills, support, and knowledge, the project not only helped them overcome their nightmares but also empowered them to become agents of change in their communities. As the fishing community of Tabugon continues to face the impacts of climate change, Project Pitik serves as an example of hope and resilience, demonstrating the transformative potential of collective action and compassion.

## IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Despite its noble objectives and carefully planned activities, Project Pitik encountered several implementation challenges that tested the resilience and adaptability of the project team. These challenges, ranging from logistical constraints to external factors beyond control, posed significant hurdles throughout the duration of the project.

- **Conflicting Times of the Speakers and Participants**

One of the primary challenges faced by Project Pitik was the coordination of schedules between the speakers or facilitators and the participants. In a community where livelihood activities often dictate the daily routines of fishermen and their families, finding mutually convenient times for workshops and training sessions proved to be a daunting task. The irregular and unpredictable nature of fishing schedules compounded this challenge, making it difficult to ensure consistent attendance and participation from the target beneficiaries. Despite efforts to accommodate varying availabilities, scheduling conflicts persisted, leading to suboptimal engagement and occasional disruptions in the flow of activities.

- **Bad Weather Conditions**

Situated in a typhoon-prone region, Tabugon, Liloan, Southern Leyte, is no stranger to inclement weather conditions, which posed a significant challenge to the implementation of Project Pitik. From sudden downpours to severe storms, adverse weather events often disrupted planned activities, forcing last-minute cancellations or rescheduling. These disruptions not only affected the logistics of transporting materials and equipment but also raised safety concerns for both participants and facilitators. Moreover, the fear and anxiety associated with impending storms could exacerbate the psychological distress experienced by the children, further complicating the project's objectives of providing support and empowerment.

- **Series of University Activities in Conflict with the Schedule**

Another challenge that Project Pitik encountered was the clash of schedules with other university activities and commitments. As an academic institution engaged in various research, teaching, and outreach initiatives, Southern Leyte State University often had multiple concurrent events and obligations that competed for resources and attention. This resulted in logistical constraints which affected the planning and execution of Project Pitik activities. Additionally, the faculty and staff involved in the project were occasionally pulled away to fulfill their responsibilities in other university-related endeavors, disrupting the continuity and momentum of Project Pitik's implementation.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Implications:

- **Empowerment through Art.** Project Pitik offers fisherfolk's children a creative outlet to express their emotions and experiences in the aftermath of typhoons. By harnessing the power of mobile photography, these children are empowered to transform their trauma into art, fostering a sense of self-expression.
- **Building Resilience.** Through the process of capturing images and narrating their stories, participants gain a deeper understanding of disaster resiliency. They learn to navigate adversity with resilience, finding strength in their narratives and experiences.
- **Amplifying Voices.** By centering the perspectives of fisherfolk's children, Project Pitik amplifies voices that are often marginalized in discussions of disaster preparedness and response. Their captured images and narratives offer invaluable insights into the lived experiences of those most affected by typhoons.

### Recommendations:

- **Sustainable Implementation.** To ensure the long-term impact of Project Pitik, it is recommended to establish sustainable mechanisms for ongoing support and training in mobile photography skills. This could involve partnering with organizations or schools to integrate photography workshops into existing educational programs.
- **Community Engagement.** Engaging the broader community, including parents, teachers, and local leaders, is crucial for the success of the project. By fostering community buy-in and support, the project can reach more children and have a broader impact on building disaster resilience.
- **Mental Health Support.** Recognizing the psychological toll of typhoons on fisherfolk's children, it is essential to provide ongoing mental health support and resources. This could include counseling services, peer support groups, and awareness campaigns to reduce the stigma around seeking help for mental health issues.

## DOCUMENTATION

### Activity 1. Introduction of the Project and MOA Signing







## Activity 2. Training on Mobile Photography







### Activity 3. Training on Storytelling





#### Activity 4. Counselling Session with Fisherfolk's Children





**Activity 5. Culminating Activity and Awareness Campaign on Climate Change and Its Threat to Children**

