

Pendulunan Trading Center: Proven Resilience in the Face of Disaster



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Farouk Hadji Adatu
Barangay Captain

Pendulunan, Munai, Lanao del Norte



Top photo shows the Pendulunan Trading Center after it was completed in 2011. Bottom photo shows its state after Typhoon Vinta devastated Munai in December 2017. The trading center averted death and destruction as it shielded residents against a deadly flash flood.

The Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program was USAID's largest umbrella project in Mindanao, which aimed to promote peace and development through the expansion of economic opportunities, infrastructure and workforce development, and improvement in local governance.

GEM-3 got underway in January 2008 and operated until December 2013.

MINDANAO, Philippines --- Days before Christmas last year, Severe Tropical Storm Vinta (international name: Tembin) brought torrential rains that triggered flash floods and landslides in Northern Mindanao. Aside from the damage to property, the typhoon also resulted in more than 250 deaths, making it the deadliest typhoon to hit Mindanao since Bopha in 2012.

In one of the villages of the municipality of Munai in Lanao del Norte, residents witnessed the typhoon's wrath as houses were either carried off by raging floodwaters, destroyed by huge boulders or completely submerged in mud. Barangay Captain Farouk Hadji Adatu reported how residents went up the Pendulunan Trading Center's roof for safety.

"Residents here were saved because they climbed onto the roof of the Pendulunan Trading Center during the flash flood and stayed there until the flood subsided," Adatu said.

Munai, with a population of more than 30,000 people, is one of the severely hit municipalities with 30 confirmed dead and 63 missing. Of the 26 barangays in the municipality, Pendulunan is among the most devastated.

"We have seven (7) casualties in Barangay Pendulunan, but the number would have been higher had it not been for the trading center that became our refuge. About 60 people, some of them children and elderly, climbed onto the roof. If the trading center's foundation was not strong and well-built, the building would have collapsed because of the weight of the people on top of it," the barangay captain added.

The trading center also helped saved other houses because it served as a barrier for the logs and other debris. "We are truly grateful for the durability of the building. It became our safe haven during the flood," he said.

Completed in 2011, the Pendulunan Trading Center is one of the 106 trading centers constructed under The Php1.8-million barangay infrastructure project (BIP) has become a key component of social and livelihood activities in the village as it serves as a venue for public events in the barangay, as well as market day when both traders and buyers congregate.

USAID's GEM-3 Program, implemented by the Louis Berger Group, was a five-year (2008-2012) multi-faceted program which built on the work carried out under GEM-1 (1995-2002) and GEM-2 (2002-2007). It was designed to support the peace process and stimulate equitable economic growth through infrastructure development, business growth, workforce preparation, governance improvement and former combatant reintegration activities.

The infrastructure development component of GEM-3 invested in structures that are fortified to withstand disastrous weather conditions. It also adheres to international and local standards for quality, safety and the environment as set by USAID and Philippine government agencies. A total of 772 infrastructure projects, including airport runway upgrades, boat landings, highways, bridges, farm-to-market roads, grain dryers, water systems and trading centers were designed and completed under this program.