

## Typhoon-Resistant Safe Rooms



Safe rooms are typhoon-resistant structures designed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support the early recovery of communities most affected by tropical storms in the Philippines and strengthen their resilience to future disasters, both saving lives and preventing displacement. These durable shelters are made of concrete and include built-in latrines and kitchens. They also feature an indigenous extension made of lightweight materials, providing a total floor area of 24 square meters, in line with SPHERE standards. The safe rooms have withstood gusts of up to 280 km/h, providing safe refuge for families during recent disasters.

IOM, in partnership with the Australian Government and the Government of the Philippines, has built 105 safe rooms in the Bicol and Caraga Regions. This is part of IOM's commitment to provide dignified and durable shelter solutions to displaced or vulnerable communities. Combined with capacity building support on disaster preparedness and management, IOM, through the support of its donors, contributes to communities becoming more disaster- and climate-resilient, and increases their capacity to immediately recover from crises and disasters.

### 105 safe rooms

across 4 municipalities in Bicol Region and 8 in Caraga Region

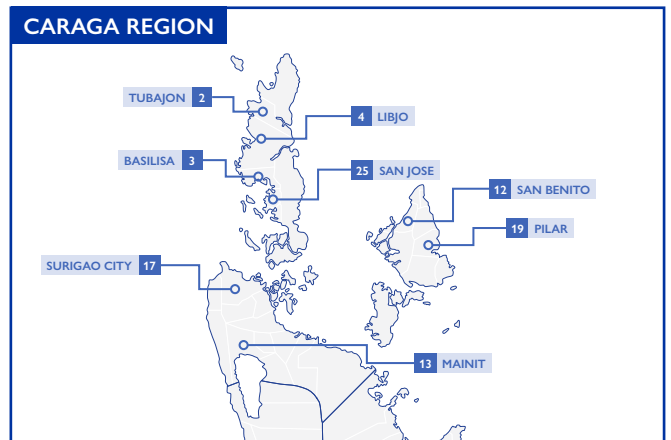
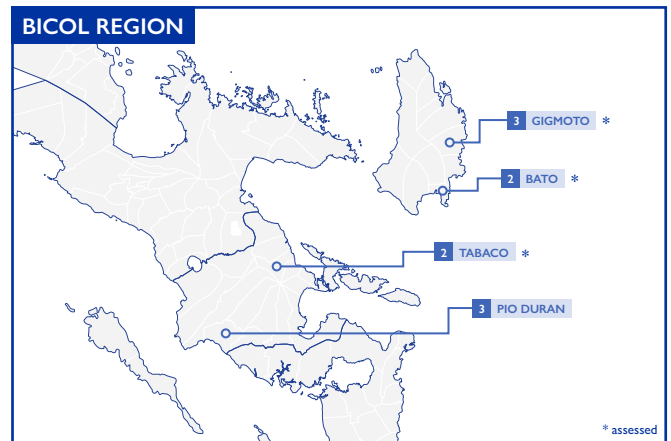
OF THE 4 MUNICIPALITIES ASSESSED

**100% of respondents** reported no significant damage to the safe rooms after disasters

**64% of respondents** affected by typhoons extended their safe rooms to relatives and friends

**97% of respondents** reported savings from the safe rooms, of up to **350 USD (550 AUD)** per household

**100% of respondents** reported satisfaction with the safe rooms and said they would recommend them to others



For more information, contact IOM Philippines:

**Tristan Burnett**  
Chief of Mission  
IOM Philippines  
tburnett@iom.int

**Euan McDougall**  
Head of Programmes  
IOM Philippines  
emcdougall@iom.int

## Sheltering from Storms: How Safe Rooms Save Lives and Livelihoods in Catanduanes

An unprecedented series of strong typhoons hit the Philippines from October to November 2024. Severe Tropical Storm Kristine and Super Typhoon Pepito caused significant damage and destruction across the Bicol Region, where 10 typhoon-resistant safe rooms were constructed. Despite the damage and destruction in these areas, safe rooms were successfully used throughout the series of typhoons, sheltering people from the beneficiary households and the greater community.



*“We were able to use what we learned from the simulation exercise with IOM. We remembered to prepare our go bags, which included important items such as our birth certificates.”*

– Rose

Rose is the head of her eight-member household. During the typhoon, her safe room sheltered 10 people, including members of her extended family. Their key belongings were also secured inside the safe room, which allowed them to recover immediately after the disaster.

Jose, an elderly member of the community who lives with his grandchildren, was worried about the typhoon damaging his farming and fishing equipment. Jose talked to his neighbour, Lilian, to maximize the use of their respective safe rooms. They came up with a plan: Lilian’s family would join Jose’s family in his safe room – which ended up accommodating 18 people – while Lilian’s safe room would be used to safely store both families’ furniture, documents, and livelihood equipment.



*“We felt really safe inside the safe rooms – we didn’t even notice the destruction outside caused by the strong winds.”*

– Jose

Given their experiences, Rose, Jose, and Lilian said they would gladly welcome their extended family and neighbours into their safe rooms should another strong typhoon affect their area.

The safe rooms and simulation exercises are supported by the Australian Government.

### Lessons Learned

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- Safe rooms are proven to be structurally sound and typhoon-resistant, and beneficiaries should properly maintain their safe rooms to ensure their structural integrity. A complaints and feedback mechanism (secure hotline) will remain available until the end of the project to compile information and feedback, and respond to requests for additional assistance.
- Safe rooms should be incorporated into local evacuation plans and recognized as additional evacuation sites. This can be done through localized MOUs between safe room households and local government units, as currently practiced in Catanduanes.
- The safe room initiative should be further upscaled by exploring complementary sources of funding – including Government or donor funding, micro-loan/finance schemes, and remittances – that can enable safe rooms to be provided for a wider range of beneficiaries and communities.