

Tide Embankment Project forum draws 300

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TACLOBAN CITY—Over 300 participants from different barangays in the towns of Palo, Tanauan, and this city joined a forum conducted by the Community of Yolanda Survivors and Partners to discuss the Tide Embankment Project here and its possible impacts on local communities.

The TEP is a P7.9-billion flagship project of the government that is a storm surge adaptation and mitigation measure from natural disasters such as Typhoon “Yolanda” in 2013.

The embankment is expected to run 27.3 kilometers—from Barangay 89-90 in Payapay Tacloban, Palo, up to Barangay Ambao in Tanauan. However, it has been met with resistance from different groups that question its technical integrity, the environmental issues associated with its construction, and its socio-economic impact on local communities.

Scientists and environmental advocates have raised concerns with the overall design of the tide embankment. A previous study conducted by the University of the Philippines National Institute of Geological Sciences, showed that artificial structures like the TEP aggravate coastal erosion and flooding, CYSP organizers said.

Two other groups, the Center for Environmental Concerns and the Advocates of Science and Technology for the People or AGHAM also conducted studies that revealed how the tide embankment project can affect marine ecosystems (mangroves, swamps, intertidal areas, sea grass beds) and many other natural resources in the area.

“At four meters (about 12 feet) high, can the embankment really protect the people from storm surges like that experienced in Yolanda?” the forum organizers asked.

The group also said there have been “no genuine consultations” with the communities that will be affected by the TEP.

DPWH insists that they conducted consultations, but having spoken with the communities, only an information-dissemination was conducted and the people were never really asked of their position on this project.

Moreover, there are no plans of livelihood support towards the many informal settler-families and fisherfolk that will be displaced from their sources of livelihoods, CYSP said.

Some coconut vendors in Palo have also already demolished their own homes yet have received none of the promised livelihood support in exchange, the group said.

A few residents have been offered compensation in exchange for their houses, but they report this is far from sufficient, if the government will not offer livelihood support,” CYSP added.

“Many families are soon to be evicted, when there currently is apparent lack of housing support in across Leyte. Why is the government prioritizing the Tide Embankment Project, when it fails to address the more important and urgent needs of ‘Yolanda’ survivors?”

The group called on to the Duterte administration to stop the TEP and allow a more participatory reconstruction and rehabilitation of ‘Yolanda’-affected communities.

It also called on President Duterte to realign the P7.9-billion project fund “to the actual needs of the people on decent housing, livelihood, and social services.”

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