

# Spotlight On Basilia Yao, Senior Director, Alvarez & Marsal Public Sector Services

In 2013 when disaster struck the Philippines, Co-CEO [Tony Alvarez](#) applied Alvarez & Marsal's commitment to problem solving and value creation, and in conjunction with the Alvarez Charitable Foundation, established Pinoy Relief to provide assistance to victims of Typhoon Haiyan.

Basilia Yao, Senior Director with Alvarez & Marsal's Public Sector Services Group in New York, spearheaded this effort on the ground in the Philippines, overseeing the program's execution, financial management and performance monitoring efforts. Ms. Yao's work on the initiative was recognized by *Consulting Magazine*, which recently named her one of its 2015 Top 25 Consultants for excellence in [public sector services](#).

Global Marketing sat down with Ms. Yao to discuss her recent recognition and to learn how she leveraged A&M's traditional public sector approach to help rebuild an entire Filipino municipality that was left devastated, displaced and devoid of basic human necessities.

On November 8, 2013, Typhoon Haiyan reached the Philippines, becoming one of the strongest tropical cyclones and the deadliest typhoon in the Philippines ever recorded. Many areas of Southeast Asia were severely damaged in Typhoon Haiyan's wake and more than 11 million people were affected.



The Alvarez Charitable Foundation spearheaded critical recovery efforts that provided aid to the survivors, focusing on the municipality of Guiuan in the Philippines. The Foundation created the nonprofit organization Pinoy Relief and pledged to provide on-the-ground support to fulfill Guiuan's needs in the areas of housing, schools and economic livelihood, which had all essentially been destroyed.

Ms. Yao traveled to Guiuan to manage the recovery efforts as Executive Director of Pinoy Relief, an effort that lasted for one year. ***Under her leadership, the organization successfully rebuilt 3,100 homes, 134 classrooms and more than 300 fishing boats, remarkably over the course of just one year.***

"Our presence on the ground was key to our success," recalled Ms. Yao. "It was certainly the key to establishing our credibility and trust, as well as the catalyst that allowed us to become part of the community of the people that we were serving."



### **Delivering a Proven Track Record in Public Sector Service**

Leveraging A&M’s project management approach – an integrated set of practices designed to keep initiatives on track and deliver outcomes on time and within budget – Ms. Yao and the team quickly identified the need to develop strong local partnerships. The team established relationships with the local government, other non-governmental organizations and aid groups that were providing services in order to ensure that needs were being fulfilled and that efforts were not being duplicated. This plan required a tremendous amount of coordination, progress-monitoring and communication implementation in order for the recovery effort to be successful.

Ms. Yao’s strategy also focused on establishing strong project controls. The Foundation was identifying the potential risks associated with delivering the mission. To vet the effort and risk, A&M invested in a comprehensive assessment of the situation to understand the level of damage to critical infrastructure at all levels. The team then developed an inventory of the available resources and spent a significant amount of time interviewing various government agencies and other local organizations to understand what plans and pledges were being made and where the gap in services would be. These inputs provided a strong understanding of the operating environment.

“This strategy of project controls is also very similar to what we do in a typical A&M public sector engagement. It was about developing and understanding the fact base, monitoring the progress and the budget, and communicating with all of the stakeholders on the progress of various efforts,” said Ms. Yao.

This strategic approach and focus on results is the bedrock of A&M’s reputation for successfully assisting organizations and leaders to solve complex problems to improve performance, to maximize value for citizens and to produce a social impact.



“What A&M is known for is our bias toward action,” said Ms. Yao. “That was key to how we executed the recovery work in the Philippines and in all of our work with clients. In order for us to be effective in our execution, we apply very rigorous data analysis to form a fact base and to set clear goals. Our emphasis is on rapid implementation and execution to quickly realize results. In a post-disaster type of situation, the balance of that kind of rigorous and ongoing data analysis and the focus on execution is critical, because the environment is constantly changing, but the need to continually implement and act is essential.”

### **Government Leadership Trends, Locally and Abroad**

The A&M methodology and approach have become even more essential in light of the growing trend and need for innovation in the public sector. Ms. Yao has monitored these advancements and recognizes that even in an environment of increasing budget constraints and growing demands for government services, numerous leaders are taking on complex issues and striving for creative solutions.

“Many leaders in government do not receive enough credit for being the social entrepreneurs that they really are,” she said. “Many of A&M’s state government and other public sector clients are truly bold, courageous leaders and are pushing the status quo to create value and innovative strategies in the way that they respond to changing regulatory requirements with limited resources.”

Through its leaders such as Ms. Yao, A&M has built a reputation of bringing tangible benefits to clients in an efficient, effective and sustainable manner. Ms. Yao maintains that her accomplishments could not have been achieved without her team and colleagues. The results that A&M brought to the Philippines underscore the broader team effort of staff, donors and the Alvarez family.

“For me, this recognition is quite humbling and I am incredibly honored,” said Ms. Yao. “Pinoy Relief was such a team effort and an example of the impact of A&M’s process and full resources brought to bear. I really feel that this is an award and recognition of the entire team. Our work in the public and social sectors reflects the hearts, minds and commitment of my many talented colleagues. Our success begins with clients who are ready to take on deeply complex challenges and is driven by a team effort to deliver measurable results.”

“For A&M, this award is a recognition of our laser focus on results and our ability to deliver impact in the toughest environments,” adds Ms. Yao.

### **About Basilia Yao**

Basilia Yao is a Senior Director with Alvarez & Marsal’s Public Sector Services Group in New York. Her work with clients reflects her devotion to the public and social sectors, and her commitment to bringing tangible and sustainable benefits to individuals, nonprofit organizations and government entities.

[Contact Basilia](#) to learn more about her practice and ways that A&M is leading public entities through transformative, sustainable and effective change.

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