

DSWD DRAWS SUPPORT FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

by: May Anne Ramos

As the lead agency that ensures the welfare of families affected by calamities, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) makes sure that it provides utmost social services to the those who are in need. Its sense of commitment and efficient delivery of services attract international organizations to extend help to victims of disasters through the department.

DSWD has entered into a partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) to provide each Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program household affected by typhoon Yolanda with additional cash grant of P1,300.00, on top of the regular cash transfer for the months of December 2013 and January 2014. The cash assistance program has started in the most food insecure households across 50 provinces of Leyte and Samar. It will soon be implemented in Western Visayas. The total budget for this project is Php742,575,952.00.

"We are very fortunate because we already have the Pantawid Pamilya, an impressive cash support system that helps about 4 million Filipino families across. This system has been praised in independent international assessments by the World Bank and others for the effective targeting of the most vulnerable segments of the population, and for the impact the program in the well-being of recipients," said Praveen Agrawal, Representative and Country Director of WFP – Philippines.

DSWD Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman expressed her gratitude to all the help and support that the department is getting. "Helping the victims stand on their own feet is a difficult task so we're very grateful to have support coming from WFP and other private organizations. DSWD remains committed in helping those who are trying to cope with the tragedy and with partnerships like what we have with WFP we can provide better assistance and services," she said.

As of December 27, there have been 10,198 households that received the additional cash grant from WFP with a total amount of Php13,257,400.00. ■



DSWD has partnered with WFP to implement the cash assistance programme for typhoon Yolanda survivors. In photo are Sec. Dinky Soliman and WFP Country Director Praveen Agrawal during the MOU signing.

JANUARY 2014

INSPIRE

STORIES OF HOPE AFTER TYPHOON YOLANDA

INITIATIVES AND BAYANIHAN HELP COMMUNITY RECOVER AFTER TYPHOON YOLANDA

by: Hazel Ruth Santiago

To say that Barangay Balao, Burauen, Leyte was badly hit by typhoon Yolanda is an understatement. The Balao Bridge that used to link the barangay to other communities was wrecked and roads are painted with "HELP, NO FOOD." These give clues to the previous and present obstacles endured by many upland settlers of Burauen.

But while the residents of the barangay try to cope with the effects of the typhoon, they did not lose hope in getting back on their feet again. Their initiatives and *bayanihan* efforts have helped in cleaning up their neighborhood. Working together demonstrates their willingness to regain their lives, relive their dreams, and nurture the Filipino spirit. (cont. page 2)

PAGE 4: CAROLS OF HOPE/ PAGE 8: RESILIENCY AFTER TRAGEDY
PAGE 10: A MOTHER'S JOY/ PAGE 12: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS
LECTURE SAVES A FAMILY/ PAGE 15: CCT BENEFICIARIES GIVE BACK
PAGE 16: LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CALAMITY/ PAGE 18: NEED AND HEED
PAGE 20: SEC. DINKY RECOGNIZES EFFORTS, HARDWORK OF DSWD FO VI
PAGE 22: A SURPRISE VISIT IN "TENT CITY"/ PAGE 24: DSWD DRAWS
SUPPORT FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS



INSPIRE is a collection of heart-warming stories of Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program beneficiaries and workers. It hopes to inspire and motivate everyone to rise above life's challenges.

INSPIRE is produced by the Social Marketing Unit of Pantawid Pamilya.

editorial board

EDWARD GONZALES
MARIE GRACE PONCE
MAY ANNE RAMOS
HAZEL RUTH SANTIAGO
JOVEN SANTIAGO
SAMUEL GENITA JR.

contributors:
SHERYL JANE SANICO
FO XI
JOMMEL GUTIERREZ
FO CAR

Day by day survival

The Chairman of Brgy. Balao led in mobilizing a team to help clear the road from fallen trees and debris. They were also able to get support and assistance from different barangays to fix Balao bridge using temporary logs that can support a motorcycle. The makeshift bridge was for the immediate transport of relief goods from the town to their place.

“Pagkaumaga na pagkaumaga po, pagkaalis ng bagyo, nagpunta na po ang aming kapitan kasama kaming ibang konschal sa bayan para kunin ang mga relief goods, lahat ng may habal ay nakiisa para mas mapabilis ang pagkuha ng relief goods sa bayan, kung hindi po ay gutom po ang aabutin ng mga tao dito. (That early morning after Typhoon Yolanda, the Chairman, along with some of the councilors, went to town to gather the relief goods. All those with motorcycles cooperated to expedite the transfer of goods.)” said Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program beneficiary Margie Macapanas on how the relief goods from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) reached their barangay.

The townsfolk also found ways to gather food once the sky cleared up. Their measly budget from a good harvest as well as the cash grants from DSWD Pantawid Pamilya enabled them to buy fish and meat at the town's market. “Nakakabili lang naman po kami ng ulam katulad ng isda at karne kapag nakatanggap po kami ng cash grants mula sa Pantawid o pag maganda ang ani ng kopra” (We are only able to buy fish and meat when we receive cash grants from Pantawid Pamilya or if we have good harvest.) Margie shared.

The officials of Barangay Balao have also been very responsive in coordinating with the municipal government of Burauen to ensure the prompt pick-up and delivery of relief goods from DSWD for upland barangays.

DSWD assistance

The DSWD had disaster preparations and response before and after the typhoon to ensure that typhoon-stricken areas like Barangay Balao will receive help. The call of duty will always be more important than their personal circumstances. DSWD Region VIII staff including the Municipal and Barangay government units were on service even if most of them were also victims of typhoon Yolanda.

Around 2,700 household beneficiaries of Pantawid Pamilya in Municipality of Burauen received their cash grants last December 23. DSWD Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman said that the grant was expected to help these families get back on their feet after they were devastated by the super typhoon Yolanda.

Residents of Brgy. Balao built a makeshift bridge that links the community to other towns and municipalities.



“We are sensitive with the needs of our partner-beneficiaries and we truly understand the difficulty they are having right now that is why we have doubled time to ensure that our partner-beneficiaries received their grants the soonest,” Soliman said.

Margie is one of the beneficiaries who received cash grants on the said payout. The World Food Programme (WFP) has partnered with Pantawid Pamilya to provide additional cash assistance (Php1,300.00) and 10-kg of rice to each Typhoon Yolanda-affected family that is a CCT beneficiary. The assistance will be provided for a period of two months.

With the extent of damage brought by the typhoon to their land and crops, Margie remains optimistic and excited with the new year ahead.

“Excited po ako sa papasok na taon. Iniisip ko na lang na bago ang lahat, bagong buhay. Uunahin ko lang ang Diyos at sigurado makakabangon ako. Sa ngayon ang mahalaga lang ay matulungan ko ang mga bata na magkasigla sa pagpasok kasi nawalan sila ng gana pumasok nung nasira ang school nila, nawala ang mga gamit nila pang eskwela at pati mga damit nila. Kaya naman tuwang tuwa ako na malaman na makakatanggap kami ng cash grants mula sa Pantawid at may dagdag pa. Gagamitin ko to para mabigyang sigla ulit ang mga anak ko na mag-aral ulit pagpasok ng Enero. (I am excited for the coming year. I always think that it is a new start, new lives. I know that I can stand tall again if I put God first. What's important today is to encourage my children to study again because they were disheartened when they saw their school ruined by the typhoon and their school supplies lost. I am really delighted to know that we are receiving cash grants from Pantawid Pamilya. I will maximize it to help my kids on their schooling this coming January.)” Margie said. ■



Councilor Margie Macapanas relates how her neighbors worked together to tidy up their neighborhood after the typhoon.



Children survivors of San Joaquin, Palo gather to rehearse songs for *simbang gabi*.

CAROLS OF HOPE

by: Joven Santiago

In ruins — this is how super typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) left San Joaquin, Palo, a coastal barangay in Leyte after it hit the Visayan region of the Philippines. Next to Tacloban City, Palo holds the second highest number of casualties recorded during the catastrophe with almost 70 percent of the coastal barangays washed out.

The disaster happened more than a month before Christmas. One can easily say that it would not be possible for people who lost almost everything to remember such a holiday of joy. But for the children of San Joaquin, Christmas is a special celebration, and not even Yolanda can take it away from them.

To feel the Christmas spirit amid the ruins, the children made ways to share the sheer hopes that they have to other survivors of Yolanda. One of which is cleaning their ruined parish church. Instead of holding toys, they are seen carrying mops taller than them to tidy up the church. They said it is their contribution to the collective efforts that the survivors in their barangay are doing to gradually recover. It saddens them to see their church disarranged.

The simple clean-up activity, however, evolved into something extraordinary. After mopping the floor, their voices can be heard echoing through the broken windows and dilapidated roofs of the parish church as they start gathering and singing.

Fifty-four children survivors of San Joaquin gather every afternoon to rehearse for *simbang gabi*. According to Eunice Alcober of St. Joachim Parish Youth Ministry, most of these children lost their homes and their loved ones. In order not to let the tragedy deprive them of the spirit of Christmas, they decided to form a chorale that will serve as a beacon of hope to the survivors. The children sang songs for *simbang gabi* as well as carols for the people.

What may seem a simple entertainment for others is something that the children consider their way of coping from the tragedy and putting hopes in their fellow survivors' hearts. Even if they were not able to sing Christmas carols in the neighborhood, which is one of their Holiday traditions, they could still feel the Christmas spirit by joining the chorale.

Beverly and John Paul Arcena, both beneficiaries of Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, did not only lose their house but a brother as well. They recounted that their mother was the only one who held them (ten siblings) together, but due to the strong surge their four-year old brother drowned – adding him to the hundreds of children killed by Typhoon Yolanda in their barangay. Their loss may have given them sadness but it brought them even more hope.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), in partnership with the United Nations World Food Programme, started in December giving out emergency cash grants to the beneficiaries of Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program who were heavily affected by typhoon Yolanda.

Each household-beneficiary gets Php1,300.00 per month aside from the regular cash grant that the CCT provides. 10 kilograms of rice is also given to each affected family for the months of December and January.

Josephine Arcena, mother of Beverly and John Paul, sees the cash assistance program as a good head start in the new chapter of their lives with nothing but themselves and the help they constantly get from DSWD.



MISSING BUNSO: Geneva and John Paul visit youngest brother John Carlo in the mass grave in front of St. Joachim Church. Like other children and parents visiting the mass grave, they bring candles and toys to the grave of the brother they have lost to Yolanda.



LITTLE VOICES: Angelic voices echo within the parish church as the children survivors practice singing carols.

“Pagkatapos ng bagyo, basang bigas lang ang kinain naming pamilya (after the typhoon, we only ate wet rice),” recalls Inay Josephine who is very thankful for the supply of rice.

“Ngayon nakakakain naman kami ng maayos kahit hindi pa nakakabalik yung asawa ko sa pangingisda dahil sa tulong ng DSWD. Na-wash out lahat ng notebook at libro ng mga anak ko sa eskwela kaya bukod sa pagkain, siguro uunahin ko din muna mga gamit nila eskwela para may magamit sila,

(Even if my husband has not gone fishing yet, we can still eat because of the assistance of DSWD. My children's notebooks and books were all washed out so I guess, aside from food, I will also buy them school supplies that they can use),” said Josephine when asked about how she will spend the cash grants that she will receive. She also shared the happiness she gets whenever she sees her children sing joyously.

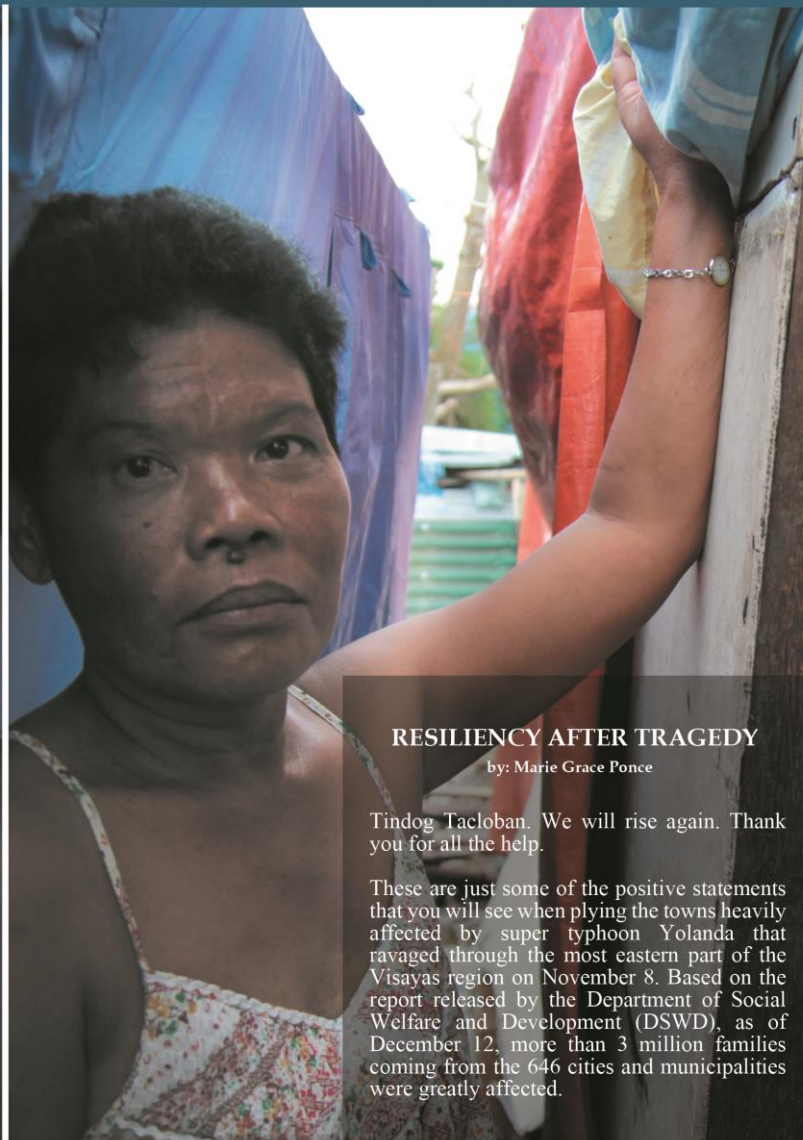


LITTLE HANDS: Children of San Joaquin clean the damaged St. Joachim Parish Church as preparation for simbang gabi.

The children's chorale also performed in the misa de gallo of their parish. They all looked forward to this mass as it is the night they sang for their fellow survivors in San Joaquin. They celebrated a humble and meaningful Noche Buena under the roof of their own parish church.

The children of San Joaquin are testaments that kids understand things from a different perspective. For them, lanterns did not have to light the streets and carols need not be sung in porches to celebrate Christmas. The season of giving can be celebrated even if the only thing they have is the shared courage and hope of all the survivors in San Joaquin. Palo as they start their lives anew. ■





RESILIENCY AFTER TRAGEDY

by: Marie Grace Ponce

Tindog Tacloban. We will rise again. Thank you for all the help.

These are just some of the positive statements that you will see when plying the towns heavily affected by super typhoon Yolanda that ravaged through the most eastern part of the Visayas region on November 8. Based on the report released by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), as of December 12, more than 3 million families coming from the 646 cities and municipalities were greatly affected.

In a statement issued by DSWD Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, she said that “This is one great challenge for all of us. While we recognize that we are in a very difficult situation, we are confident that with the support of the national government and the aid we are receiving, these people will rise again.”

Soliman also shared that the department has started the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program pay-out in areas affected by the typhoon. In the municipality of Palo in Leyte, more than 800 household partner-beneficiaries of the conditional cash transfer were able to receive their grants. Pantawid Pamilya is a human development program of the national government that invests in the health and education of poor households particularly of children aged 0-14.

Among those who first received their grant is Lola Emilia Villablanca, 63 years old. Her house was torn down by the strong winds and raging water brought by the typhoon. After the rains, they constructed a makeshift house out of the materials they got from the ruins of their damaged property.

“Kahit nawalan kami ng bahay, ang importante buhay kaming lahat. Itong perang nakuha ko ay ibibili ko ng damit ng mga apo ko at gamit sa eskwela. Lahat kasi ng damit namin maging ng mga gamit nila sa eskwela ay naanod na sa tubig (We may have lost a house, but we are still lucky that we are all alive. I will use the money that I received today to purchase clothes and school supplies. All of our clothes including their school supplies were carried by the flood.)”

Priscilla Medrano, also a beneficiary of Pantawid Pamilya, clearly remembered the tragic day the typhoon came and almost took their lives. “Ang lakas po talaga ng hangin. Unti-unti ng nagbabagsakan ang mga pader

ng classroom, kaya pinilit po naming makalabas. Nagtago po kami sa loo ng CR (comfort room) kaya po kami nakaligtas. Kung hindi po kami nakalabas, malamang isa na din po kami sa mga namatay. (The wind was so strong. The walls inside the classroom started to collapse, that's when I decided to leave the classroom. We stayed inside a comfort room. Have we not moved out of the classroom, we could have been dead.)

Aling Priscilla's family were among those who were evacuated in the nearest school building prior to the land fall of the typhoon. Upon receiving her grant amounting to Php2,200.00, she went to the market to buy food for her kids. “Bibili ako ng manok saka prutas dahil nirequest yan ng mga anak ko. Bibili din ako ng bagong damit nila kahit tig-isang pares lang. Yung iba ibibili ko ng mga gamit nila pang iskul. Halos lahat ng gamit namin natangay ng tubig. Kung may matitira pa bibili ako ng materyales para sa bahay namin. (I am going to buy chicken and fruits as requested by my children. I will also buy some clothes for my kids and school supplies. Almost all of our clothes including their school supplies were drowned in the water. If I still have money, I will buy some materials to construct our house).

Despite what happened, Lola Emila and Aling Priscilla are very much hopeful with the coming year.

“Madami naman kaming tulong na natatanggap. Kung hindi dahil sa mga relief na binigay ng DSWD wala kaming kakainin ngayon. Tapos ngayon may pera pa kami dahil sa Pantawid Pamilya. Malaking biyaya na iyan para sa amin at malaking tulong upang muling makabangon (We're grateful for all the help we get. Our food comes from the relief goods that DSWD gave us and now we have money from Pantawid Pamilya. These are great blessings to help us rebuild our lives)”, Aling Priscilla concluded. ■

A MOTHER'S JOY

by: Hazel Ruth Santiago

"A mother's joy begins when new life is stirring inside...when a tiny heartbeat is heard for the very first time and a playful kick reminds her that she is never alone." We often hear this famous quote about mothers, but for 39-year-old Nerissa Castil, her joy is far beyond her new born baby.

November was Nerissa's expected month of delivery for her 7th baby. She was expecting that any day of November, an angel will be added to her family. When the typhoon hit Palo, Leyte last November 8, 2013, she was hoping that all her family members were safe including the baby in her womb. She was so grateful to God that even though trees struck their house and their properties were washed out her family was still safe and complete.

After the typhoon, however, they have to face the damage that it left. Her husband, a rice farmer, was looking forward to that glorious day of harvest two days after the typhoon struck. But the rice fields were terribly damaged and their two carabaos died.

Inay Nerissa gave birth to a healthy baby girl two days after the disaster. Though in the brink of distress, Inay Nerissa was grateful that she had a safe delivery and a healthy baby. When asked how she would face her life after the storm she said, "Buti nalang po maraming tulong na dumating at hindi kami pinabayaang. Dahil po sa relief goods nakaipon ako ng pagkain para sa pamilya ko. Ang mahalaga po ngayon ay ang mga anak ko." (It was a good thing that a lot of relief came and we were not abandoned. I was able to gather food for my family and most importantly, my kids are here.)

Inay Nerissa is one of the Pantawid Pamilya beneficiaries who received their cash grants and additional financial assistance and rice support from the World Food Programme (WFP). DSWD has tied up with WFP for the cash assistance program for CCT beneficiaries from Yolanda-affected areas.

"Wag kayong mag-alala may pamasko ang 4Ps. Bibilhan ko kayo ng tsinelas, damit at spaghetti (Don't worry, 4Ps has something for us this Christmas. I'll buy you slippers, dresses, and spaghetti)," Inay Nerissa was teary-eyed as she recounted how she talked to her children about the good news of cash grants from DSWD.

■ INSPIRE

"Awang-awa ako sa mga anak ko dahil damit ng tatay nila ang paulit-ulit nilang nilang sinusuot, kaya naman sabi ko sa kanila pag may lumabis sa cash grants ay ibibili ko sila ng school supplies at damit." (I felt pity for my children because they had to wear their father's clothes. I promised that I would buy them new clothes and school supplies with the excess cash grants.)

When asked how she will face the coming new year, Inay Nerissa with tears in her eyes said, "Sabi ko sa mga anak ko kahit anong mangyari magpatuloy kayo sa pag-aaral nyo". Sabi nga ng mga naririnig kong grupo, "TINDOG KUNO, TINDOG PALO, IPAGPATULOY LANG". (I told my kids that no matter what happens, they have to work hard in their studies. As what I always hear from a group, Rise Palo, continue enduring.) ■

■ PAGE 11

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS LECTURE SAVES A FAMILY

by: May Anne Ramos

Cristina Bendoy, 33, knew that the heavy rains and powerful wind that super typhoon Haiyan would bring could put her family in danger. So before the storm made a landfall in her province and other parts of the country on November 8, she, her husband, and three children packed essentials such as flashlight, food, and clothes and evacuated their home.

Cristina was able to prepare for the typhoon, thanks to the lesson on community risk reduction and preparedness that she learned in the Family Development Sessions (FDS). FDS, held once a month, is an activity of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, the Philippines CCT. As one of the conditionalities of the program, Cristina and other beneficiaries attend FDS that serves as a venue for the discussion on practical topics such as effective parenting, husband and wife relationships, child development, laws affecting the Filipino family, gender and development, and home management.

In one of the sessions, beneficiaries were taught to be disaster-ready – a very handy topic as the Philippines is prone to typhoons and other disasters. “Bago kami umalis ng bahay papuntang evacuation center, nagdala ako sa bag ng flashlight, pagkain, at damit para sa pamilya ko. Natutunan ko ang pagiging handa sa sakuna sa FDS (Before going to the evacuation center, I packed flashlight, food, and clothes for my family. I learned about disaster preparedness in FDS),” said Cristina, a Set 4 Pantawid Pamilya beneficiary.

Cristina’s house was one of the millions of properties that

the typhoon wiped out. The wind blew off their home’s roof, washing out their picture frames, her kids’ medals and school supplies, and pieces of furniture.

“Nag-alala ako para sa mga anak ko kaya kami umalis. Safe naman kami pero yung mga gamit naming naiwan sa bahay, nabasa talaga (I was worried about my children that’s why we left. We were safe but all our things inside our house got wet),” she narrated.

Cristina is grateful that aside from the cash grants her family receives from Pantawid Pamilya, she also learns many practical things whenever she attends FDS. She related, “Hindi talaga ako umaabsent sa FDS. Importante yung mga tinuturo sa amin tulad ng pagkakaroon ng tamang values at pagbibigay ng tulong sa kapwa, pagmamahalan, at pakikipagkaibigan (I always attend FDS. I find the topics we discuss very important like having proper values, helping and caring for neighbors, and the importance of friendship.)”

Life-changing

It would take several days for the Bendoy family to completely recover from their difficult experience. But despite what happened, she is hopeful that they will be able to surpass all challenges as long as they are together and receive assistance from Pantawid Pamilya.

“Ito pong cash grant ay gagamitin ko pambili ng pagkain para sa mga anak ko. Para makakain naman sila ng masarap at masustansya. Pambili din ito ng ibang gamit na nasira dahil sa bagyo (I will use the cash grant to buy nutritious food for my kids. I will also buy things that we will need for fixing our house),” she said.

As a balut vendor, her family’s income does not suffice to address the needs of her three children. She and her husband need to work overtime to make ends meet. “Ang hirap-hirap po talaga ng buhay namin. Kaming mag-asawa maghapon kaming nagtitinda sa



terminal. Minsan alas-otso na kami nakakauwi. (Life is not easy for us. My husband and I work day and night. Sometimes we sell balut at the bus terminal until 8PM)," she said.

When asked what have been the changes in her life since she became a Pantawid Pamilya beneficiary, she said, "Malaking tulong kasi wala namang ganito noong bata pa ako. Mula pa maliit ako ganito na ang buhay ko, nagtitinda ng balut. Ayokong maranasan ng mga anak ko ang buhay namin ng asawa ko. Gusto ko makapagtapos sila ng pag-aaral (It has been really helpful to us. We don't have it when I was young. I have been poor since I was a kid. I don't my children to experience the difficult life that I and my husband had. I want them to finish school.)"

Not losing hope

Cristina's three kids are her source of inspiration. She is proud of them as they are all doing well in school. Her eldest daughter has been a consistent honor student since Grade 1, and her other kids want to follow suit.

"Simula Grade 1 hanggang Grade 6 nasa honor roll siya. Pati yung mga kapatid niya gusto siyang gayahin. Natutuwa kaming mag-asawa kasi masipag silang mag-aral (She's in the honor roll since Grade 1 until Grade 6. Her siblings want to be like her. As their parents, we're happy because they like studying)," she said.

They may not have all the riches in the world and their home may take a while to be fixed, but as long as their faith and love for each other are strong, Cristina knows that her family can face any Yolanda that may come their way. ■

CCT BENEFICIARIES GIVE BACK

by: Sheryl Jane Sanico

After typhoon Yolanda devastated many provinces on November 8, beneficiaries of Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program who were not affected by the calamity offered their help to the victims. In Region VII, for instance, Mayla Batoon of Barrio Luz, Cebu City, did not think twice in volunteering for the relief operations of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

the Cebu International Convention Center (CICC) last November.

"Pinaabtik to nga pagpahibalo sa amoa nga nanginahanglan ang DSWD og mga volunteers sa CICC kay magrepack daw kuno. Bisan igo-igo ra gyud ang amoang kwarta ipamilite miadto gyud mi didto aron motabang (It was an urgent call for volunteers by the DSWD. Even though we only have enough money left for a roundtrip



Beneficiaries of Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program in Cebu devoted their time and effort in repacking of relief goods in Cebu International Convention Center.

Many of the volunteers were also victims of the recent 7.2 magnitude earthquake that hit Bohol, Cebu, and many areas in Visayas.

"Dako kayo og natabang ang Pantawid Pamilya sa amoa busa panahon na pud, bisan sa ingon ani ka gamay nga sakripisyo, mapakita namo ang amoang pasalamat sa programa pinaagi sa pagtabang sa uban (Pantawid Pamilya has been a huge help to our families. It is high time that we return the favor by serving those who are in need, even in our own simple ways)," said 38-year old Mayla. Mayla has three kids and is a beneficiary of the Pantawid Pamilya, a poverty-reduction strategy of the national government that provides cash assistance to identified poor households.

jeepney fare, we went to CICC to help out in the repacking)," shared Salve Portugaliza, 58, years old and Caroline Quibo-quibo, 47.

Those who were victims of the earthquake in Cebu last October have also proved that calamities like typhoon and earthquake may destroy properties and livelihood, but they can never dampen the bayanihan spirit of Filipinos.

"Biktima pud mi adtong milabay nga linog busa kabalo gyud mi sa gibati anang magub-an ug balay. Isip benepisaryo sa programa murag amoa pong responsibilidad nga makatabang sa uban nga nanginahanglan (We are also victims of the recent earthquake that hit Cebu, we know how it feels to have your own house destroyed. As beneficiaries of the program, we felt the need to also help those who are in need)," added Vilma Aliviado, 38 years old. ■

LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CALAMITY

by: May Anne Ramos and Jomel Gutierrez

Typhoon Yolanda destroyed houses and buildings, uprooted trees, and knocked out electric posts but it was not able to cripple the spirit of Filipinos. The Parent Leaders of Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program in Capiz, for instance, looked after the beneficiaries under their clusters and other survivors when they all experienced the rage of the typhoon.

Parent Leader Annaliza Ambrosio of Brgy. Calidquid in Mambusao, Capiz made sure that the beneficiaries under her cluster were all safe during the disaster. She is a Parent Leader with 19 members, all of whom she advised to evacuate before the typhoon made a landfall.

She narrated, “Tinawagan ko yung ibang miyembro ng cluster ko na hindi pa nag-evacuate na maghanda nang umalis sa bahay nila bago pa bumagyo. Mahirap na baka lalo silang mapahamak lalo na yung mga anak nila. (I called the members of my cluster who had not evacuated yet. I told them to leave their house before the storm arrives. It’s for the safety of their kids.)”

Together with her four children, Annaliza left her house to stay somewhere safe. The Head Teacher of Tongatong Elementary School entrusted to her the keys to the facility so can lead the evacuees inside the classrooms.

“Nagpapasalamat naman ako at ipinagkatiwala sa akin yung susi ng eskwela. Mas madali kaming nakapasok at naging safe naman kami noong umulan na nang malakas (I’m grateful that the school key was entrusted to me so we were able to evacuate right away. We were all safe when it started raining),” she said.

While she acted brave and in control during the disaster, Annaliza could not help but to get teary eyed as she related the challenges she has encountered.

“Napakahirap talaga noong panahon na bumagyo. Mahirap magtawag ng mga miyembro sa cluster ko at kumbinisin sila na mag-evacuate na. Tapos nagkasakit din ako at yung dalawang anak ko. Pagbalik pa namin ng bahay sira-sira na pala (It was very difficult when the typhoon hit. I had to call my members and convince them to evacuate. My two children and I got sick then we arrived home it was already destroyed),” she related. She and her children now reside in a makeshift hut they built, just outside their tattered house. They stayed at the evacuation center for two weeks.

Arlaine Babela, a 42 year-old mother of five, suffered the same fate. What remained of her house are only crumpled roof and broken walls.

“Sabi ko sa asawa ko na umalis na kami ng bahay at huwag ng mamasada ng tricycle. Buti na lang yung malaking concrete na bahay sa malapit sa amin inoffer na doon muna tumuloy habang bumabagyo (I told my husband that we should evacuate and that he should not go out with his tricycle. We were lucky that we were offered to stay in a concrete house near us while it was raining),” a Parent Leader Pontevedra, Capiz recounted.

It was also a terrible time for her family because not only they lost their house but right after the typhoon her son was admitted to the hospital and the other two children were ill as well. But despite the sorry state of her family, she immediately visited other beneficiaries of Pantawid Pamilya who were staying in evacuation centers.

Pantawid Pamilya beneficiaries at her community appreciated that she keeps on checking them especially those who are

still living in a gym as an evacuation center.

“Lagi po siyang nandito sa gym kinukumusta kami at pamilya namin (She’s always here in the gym caring for us and our family),” a fellow Pantawid beneficiary shared.

Being a Parent Leader requires leadership skills to mobilize people and disseminate correct information to members. Apart from their responsibilities at home, Parent Leaders are also expected to check their members’ attendance during meetings and Family Development Session and to lead in conducting other activities in their community. Nevertheless, both Annaliza and Arlaine said that being a Parent Leader is a fulfilling responsibility.

“Hindi madaling maging Parent Leader pero masaya na rin ako dahil nakakatulong ako sa kapwa ko benepisyaryo (It’s not easy being a Parent Leader but I’m happy that I get to help other beneficiaries),” Annaliza explained.

“Masaya ako na kahit mahirap lang ako at nasalanta din kami ng bagyo, nandoon ako para sa kanila nakatulong kahit papaano (I’m happy that even though I’m poor and became a victim of the typhoon I was able to help in my own little ways),” Arlaine said. ■

Pantawid Pamilya Parent Leader Annaliza assists a co-beneficiary during a pay-out in Mambusao, Capiz.





No thanking would be enough

In a Thanksgiving celebration of DSWD Field Office 8, Secretary Corazon Soliman lauded all field workers including Ruth and their sacrifices to give utmost services.

“Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat. Hindi mapapantayan ang mga sakripisyong ibinigay ninyo lalong lalo na sa panahong kinailangan tayo ng milyon-milyong tao. Sana ay huwag kayong magsawa sa serbisyong ito hangga’t hindi natin nakikitang nakatayong muli ang mga tao (Thank you very much. The sacrifices you made most especially during the time when millions of people needed us are unparalleled. I hope that you will never stop being of service until we see the people standing on their own),” said Sec. Soliman during the thanksgiving program, which was also attended by the executive committee of DSWD.

The Secretary shared the inspiring story of Ruth in the said event and assured her that her children are under the care of DSWD Field Office CALABARZON. This made Ruth less worried about her family while she is away to work for the people of Tacloban.

Picking up the broken pieces

While it will not be easy for them to start all over in Tacloban, Ruth will never leave the devastated city until such day that the beneficiaries she serves no longer needs her. When asked of her plans for the coming year, she said, “I will bring the kids back to Tacloban. We will pick up all the broken pieces and fix them together -- for there is nothing that I can’t surrender to God who is the owner of all these.”

Dedication and selflessness

Ruth is just one of the hundreds of people who have untold stories of sacrifice just to help the people who needed it the most. To the ones who heed the call of help of the millions of people affected by super typhoon Yolanda; to the ones who had to stand up just to help those who still can’t; to the ones who gave their everything despite of having nothing – we give you our endless salutation. ■

SEC. DINKY RECOGNIZES EFFORTS, HARD WORK OF DSWD FO6

by: May Anne Ramos

Secretary Corazon Juliano – Soliman led the Executive Committee (EXECOM) of the Department of Social Welfare Development (DSWD) in showing their support to and recognizing the efforts of the employees of DSWD FO6 during the “EXECOM Interaction and Thanksgiving with Field Office VI” held in December.

The secretary lauded the heroic and selfless acts of the employees in providing help to families who were displaced due to super typhoon Yolanda.

“I would like to acknowledge, commend, and congratulate all of you. Kayo ang nagtagumpay at kumilos para matulungan ang mga biktima ng Yolanda at iba pang programa ng DSWD. Sinubok ang ating katatagan bilang ahensya ngayong taong 2013. Marami sa inyo ang naging biktima ng bagyo at nakarinig ng mga hindi magagandang komento mula sa ibang tao ngunit natili kayong matatag at kumikilos bilang isang pamilya o kagarawan (I would like to acknowledge, commend, and congratulate all of you. Your hard work has helped Yolanda victims and implemented the other programs of DSWD in 2013. Many of you are also victims of the typhoon who hear negative comments from other people, but you remained strong and acted as one family),” said Sec. Soliman.

She has one advice to everyone in giving service: “Pinakamahalaga ang pasasalamat sa Maykapal at ang paglilingkod ng mahusay, matapat, at magiliw. (The most important thing is being grateful to our Creator and continue serving skillfully, honestly, and compassionately) I hope the joy of serving will continue to bind (DSWD)

Region VI in the service of the Filipino.”

DSWD Usec. Mateo Montano, Usec. Parisya Hashim - Taradji, Usec. Angelita Gregorio-Medel, Asst. Sec. Javier Jimenez, Asst. Sec. Teodulo Romo, Jr., and Asst. Sec. Chona David-Casis were also at the event.

One of the highlights of the program was doing the exercises on Laughter Yoga to teach the employees how to release tension through laughing, chanting, clapping, and simple activities that help stress and improve well-being.

The event also included sharing of learning and experiences brought by the recent disaster. Connel Rose Canto, Municipal Link of Estancia, Iloilo narrated, “Kahit na tayo mismo biktima rin ng bagyo huwag natin ipakita na nahihirapan tayo kasi sa atin din sila kukuha ng lakas (We must not show the victims that we are getting tired or discouraged because they also get strength from us).”

Regional Director Ma. Evelyn Macapobre, on the other hand, made everyone teary eyed by sharing the “lowest point” of her life when Yolanda hit the province. It was when she learned that her daughter was sick and she was not able to take care of her. But despite the challenges, she shared that the “highest point” of the unfortunate event was being able to witness DSWD employees, LGUs, and other people work together to speed up relief efforts.

The Interaction and Thanksgiving program became a celebration of life and a venue for the employees to console and express their support to one another. DSWD FO6 remains committed and compassionate in fulfilling their duties and providing Filipinos with the utmost service they deserve. ■

NEED AND HEED: A WORKER'S SACRIFICE FOR THE PEOPLE OF TACLOBAN

by: Joven Santiago

"I went back to Tacloban for our beneficiaries. They need us now more than ever."

This is a powerful statement shared by 41-year old Ruth Magallanes, City Link for Tacloban City of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program in an interview. Ruth is just one of the hundreds of staff of DSWD Field Office VIII who despite being heavily affected by super typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) devoted themselves to be of service to the thousands of people who survived the catastrophic event.

In the said interview, Ruth recalled that she and her family had nothing to eat for almost a week after the typhoon. The storm surge destroyed their house and washed away everything. Scared of the hunger, violence, and destruction that took over Tacloban, Ruth brought her five children with just the clothes that they were wearing to Villamor Airbase in Pasay. They later transferred in Haven for Women in Alabang, a facility that provides temporary shelter and protective custody to women.

After five days of being in the shelter, Ruth found a house that she can rent in Binan, Laguna through the help of Sandra Pilobello, a volunteer she met in Villamor Airbase.

"I only had to make sure that my children are settled and that they have their basic needs before I finally went back to Tacloban to serve the people who need me more, even if I know that my kids need me too," she said.

Homeless and alone, Ruth decided to stay with her fellow survivors in an evacuation center in Tacloban City so she could perform her duties as a City Link. She helped in the Validation of Typhoon Affected Pantawid Pamilya Beneficiaries conducted by DSWD for the cash assistance program with the World Food Programme (WFP). DSWD and WFP became partners in providing Php1,300.00 cash support for the most vulnerable and food insecure Pantawid Pamilya families affected by the catastrophic typhoon. This is addition to the cash grants that the beneficiaries will get for the months of December and January. The families will also receive two months supplies of rice.

Even after the validation, Ruth decided to stay in Tacloban City for the beneficiaries who are clueless on how to rebuild their lives. She was not even able to celebrate Christmas with her family. It was a tough decision to make but she knew it was for a good cause.



No thanking would be enough

In a Thanksgiving celebration of DSWD Field Office 8, Secretary Corazon Soliman lauded all field workers including Ruth and their sacrifices to give utmost services.

“Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat. Hindi mapapantayan ang mga sakripisyong ibinigay ninyo lalong lalo na sa panahong kinailangan tayo ng milyon-milyong tao. Sana ay huwag kayong magsawa sa serbisyong ito hangga’t hindi natin nakikitang nakatayong muli ang mga tao (Thank you very much. The sacrifices you made most especially during the time when millions of people needed us are unparalleled. I hope that you will never stop being of service until we see the people standing on their own),” said Sec. Soliman during the thanksgiving program, which was also attended by the executive committee of DSWD.

The Secretary shared the inspiring story of Ruth in the said event and assured her that her children are under the care of DSWD Field Office CALABARZON. This made Ruth less worried about her family while she is away to work for the people of Tacloban.

Picking up the broken pieces

While it will not be easy for them to start all over in Tacloban, Ruth will never leave the devastated city until such day that the beneficiaries she serves no longer needs her. When asked of her plans for the coming year, she said, “I will bring the kids back to Tacloban. We will pick up all the broken pieces and fix them together -- for there is nothing that I can’t surrender to God who is the owner of all these.”

Dedication and selflessness

Ruth is just one of the hundreds of people who have untold stories of sacrifice just to help the people who needed it the most. To the ones who heed the call of help of the millions of people affected by super typhoon Yolanda; to the ones who had to stand up just to help those who still can’t; to the ones who gave their everything despite of having nothing – we give you our endless salutation. ■

SEC. DINKY RECOGNIZES EFFORTS, HARD WORK OF DSWD FO6

by: May Anne Ramos

Secretary Corazon Juliano – Soliman led the Executive Committee (EXECOM) of the Department of Social Welfare Development (DSWD) in showing their support to and recognizing the efforts of the employees of DSWD FO6 during the “EXECOM Interaction and Thanksgiving with Field Office VI” held in December.

The secretary lauded the heroic and selfless acts of the employees in providing help to families who were displaced due to super typhoon Yolanda.

“I would like to acknowledge, commend, and congratulate all of you. Kayo ang nagtagumpay at kumilos para matulungan ang mga biktima ng Yolanda at iba pang programa ng DSWD. Sinubok ang ating katatagan bilang ahensya ngayong taong 2013. Marami sa inyo ang naging biktima ng bagyo at nakarinig ng mga hindi magagandang komento mula sa ibang tao ngunit natili kayong matatag at kumikilos bilang isang pamilya o kagarawan (I would like to acknowledge, commend, and congratulate all of you. Your hard work has helped Yolanda victims and implemented the other programs of DSWD in 2013. Many of you are also victims of the typhoon who hear negative comments from other people, but you remained strong and acted as one family),” said Sec. Soliman.

She has one advice to everyone in giving service: “Pinakamahalaga ang pasasalamat sa Maykapal at ang paglilingkod ng mahusay, matapat, at magiliw. (The most important thing is being grateful to our Creator and continue serving skillfully, honestly, and compassionately) I hope the joy of serving will continue to bind (DSWD)

Region VI in the service of the Filipino.”

DSWD Usec. Mateo Montano, Usec. Parisya Hashim - Taradji, Usec. Angelita Gregorio-Medel, Asst. Sec. Javier Jimenez, Asst. Sec. Teodulo Romo, Jr., and Asst. Sec. Chona David-Casis were also at the event.

One of the highlights of the program was doing the exercises on Laughter Yoga to teach the employees how to release tension through laughing, chanting, clapping, and simple activities that help stress and improve well-being.

The event also included sharing of learning and experiences brought by the recent disaster. Connel Rose Canto, Municipal Link of Estancia, Iloilo narrated, “Kahit na tayo mismo biktima rin ng bagyo huwag natin ipakita na nahihirapan tayo kasi sa atin din sila kukuha ng lakas (We must not show the victims that we are getting tired or discouraged because they also get strength from us).”

Regional Director Ma. Evelyn Macapobre, on the other hand, made everyone teary eyed by sharing the “lowest point” of her life when Yolanda hit the province. It was when she learned that her daughter was sick and she was not able to take care of her. But despite the challenges, she shared that the “highest point” of the unfortunate event was being able to witness DSWD employees, LGUs, and other people work together to speed up relief efforts.

The Interaction and Thanksgiving program became a celebration of life and a venue for the employees to console and express their support to one another. DSWD FO6 remains committed and compassionate in fulfilling their duties and providing Filipinos with the utmost service they deserve. ■

A SURPRISE VISIT IN "TENT CITY"

by: Jomel Gutierrez

While everyone was busy preparing their lunch in the "Tent City" of Estancia, Iloilo where hundreds of families evacuated from their oil-spilled seaside community, a solo parent mother of two, got the biggest surprise of her life.

Aling Felimel Yamson and her two boys, Nhel Justine and Christian Jay, were eating lunch when the Department of Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman, Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary Mar Roxas and Governor of Iloilo, Hon. Arthur Defensor joined at their small dining table stalled outside their tent.

The unexpected visitors talked to Aling Felimel's children about their dream profession. One of her kids proudly insisted that he wanted to become a nurse.

On the dining table, Secretary Roxas shared a joke that made the two kids laugh so hard. It was a day to remember for the Yamson Family.

Aling Felimel and her two children left their damaged house near the seaside at Purok 3, Botongon, when a barge of National Power Corporation took the brunt of the super typhoon Yolanda causing an oil spill. They are now currently living in a tent with four other families.

"Noong bumabagyo tumakbo kami sa mga magulang ko kasi natabunan bahay namin ng malalaking puno ng niyog. Sumisipol yung hangin na sobrang lakas. 'Yung dalawang bata tinago namin sa kwarto para hindi naman sila matakot (We went to our parent's house when the typhoon came because our house was hit by a fallen tree. The wind was so strong it seemed like it was whistling. We made the kids stay in the room so they would not get scared)", she said.



Aling Felimel was supposed to clean up and fix their house after the typhoon when they were advised to leave their area. "Matapos ang bagyo, nilinis ko mag-isa yung mga kalat sa loob at labas ng bahay namin. Tapos noong una akala lang namin langis lang na natapon sa kapitbahay naamoy namin, 'yun pala oil spill na kaya lumipat na kami dito (I tried tidying up our house after the typhoon but I was surprised to learn about the oil spill so we have to evacuate here. I thought it was just oil spilled from our neighbor)", she said.



Raising her children and taking care of them now by herself is not an easy task for her but they are grateful that the government and international agencies immediately provided them assistance after the disaster.

"Malaki pasasalamat namin kasi sobra sobra ang tulong simula noong lumipat kami dito sa tent. Madami na kaming na-stock na pagkain. May araw pa na nagbibigay ng arrozcaldo at champorado (We are very thankful for all the help that we get. We were able to stock some goods. There are times that they give us arrozcaldo and champorado)", she said.

"Natutuwa din kami na lagi naming nakikita mga staff ng DSWD at munisipyo dito nag-aassist sa aming mga evacuees (It's also reassuring to see DSWD and municipal staff here assisting us evacuees)", she added.

Despite what happened after Yolanda, Aling Felimel is looking forward to start again.

"Hindi ko akalain na makakaranas ako ng ganung kalakas na bagyo. Pero sana makaalis na kami dito sa tent at makapagsimula na ulet (I never thought I'd experience that kind of calamity. I hope we'll be able to start all over again)", she said.

Her family is one of the hundreds evacuees affected by Yolanda who were assured by Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman, DILG Secretary Mar Roxas and Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin of continuous help and assistance from the government while they are recovering from the onslaught of super typhoon Yolanda.

The DSWD Secretary also emphasized to the people of Estancia that one of the government's goals is to help them cross towards a normal life after the devastation caused by catastrophe. ■