

Relief operations update from our first trip to Samar and Leyte.

November 15-22 2013

First off all, THANK YOU SO MUCH for supporting this effort to help and save people in the many affected areas of typhoon Yolanda.

"Nobody can help everybody, but everybody can help somebody!"



The PNP soldiers guarding our Ferry

It took us 47 hours to reach our base in Catbalogan, a city two hours away from Tacloban, with our van and a 10 wheeler truck.



On the Ferry

Our first trip with immediate help is over and a new team is already at base to continue the operations where we left off. The next two trucks have already left Manila and will need less time since we now know the best routes, all papers are in place, and these trucks are in much better shape.

The base (former Living Word Bible Training Center) is now in operation again after its five years inactivity since the ministry moved from Catbalogan to New Life Christian Center in Alabang, Manila.

There's now more than 50 Tacloban families in the old dormitories, and soon tents will be set up for more families arriving.

As the team becomes acquainted with the evacuees and play around with the children, we will have a fair assessment of what will help the children suffering from traumas.



The warehouse and canteen building



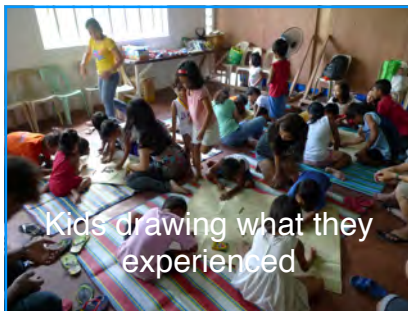
Inside the warehouse



Dormitories



Working with the youngest



Kids drawing what they experienced



Making family packages

All families are also given a medical check up and time to talk with pastors on site. We spent more than a week of work on campus and endless miles of driving around completely wiped out towns and cities in Samar and Leyte, mapping out our next moves for relief aid and future rebuilding efforts.



Our doctor in charge at her new depot



A new generator is now in place to pump up water from the well. The base has two water sources, one deep well and one with fresh, clean water from the mountain behind us. We also received a diesel generator to supply all our general electrical needs.



Temporary kitchen being raised

Even though many of the New Life buildings were damaged and some members still not accounted for, there's so far no reports of dead New Life members!



One rescued and happy family



Each family gets a "space" depending on how many they are

We have heard many reports of survival miracles that we will post on Facebook or the New Life pages after they have been confirmed and typed.

Pastor Ram in Tacloban, as well as other local pastors, have been true heroes as they went looking for and rescuing people before, during, and after the typhoon.



This was a whole city block with hundreds of homes

Pastors Paul and Lovelle in Catbalogan are also working day and night to help out at the "base" while using their church as the distribution center for the local authorities in Catbalogan.

New Life will soon receive a shipment of “module houses” specially designed for disaster areas. These come from a church in the US who have been doing relief operations around the globe for decades. This church developed a manual for relief operations that is a great tool for us now.

There's so much suffering and so much to do for years ahead. Where will all these people live while waiting for their homes to be rebuilt?

Every day thousands line up for food and water. Their work places are gone and most schools will most likely not operate before January 2014 the earliest.



There's still no electricity and only those who have generators may get to open their businesses. This also means that most people won't be able to work.

On our delivery trips around Samar and Leyte we experienced that whole towns and villages were totally wiped off the map.

Roads of concrete and asphalt were washed away. Solid buildings up to three stories high vanished, and cemeteries with concrete graves cracked up and moved around as matchboxes.



We saw places where all vegetation was gone, thousands of coconut trees spread flat out like matchsticks, metal and concrete electric masts snapped off and were thrown to the ground all over the affected areas. Huge concrete



building blocks, 10 wheeler trucks and cars was spread out in the terrain as if they had been weightless. Some cars was even up in the trees.

This was a school far away from the coast



Houses was moved far away from where they used to be standing

Our trips were from 12 to 17 hours a day and it was a continuous disaster zone where people were left with only one option: get up the next morning and survive! No one was spared from this super typhoon. The houses of the rich were completely broken along with shanty towns, schools, old churches and government buildings.

Even more sad: (disturbing pictures)



Around two weeks after the winds and the huge tsunami-like surge hit, they're still finding dead people in the rubble and debris. Hundreds or thousands may have been washed out into the sea when the water drew back. We may never know.



Our team went together with a group of Manila police men into an old brewery area to search. Within 15 minutes, they discovered three bodies and a traumatised dog poisoned by eating the decomposed remains. As I write this, our relief team just reported that they have found four more bodies.

The Manila Police Crime Scene Operation Group said that almost 4,000 is reported dead and around 1,000, missing. They expect the total number of casualties to be between 5 and 7,000.



Mass media and others are operating with numbers that vary from 10 to 50 thousand. Now, this is in Tacloban alone! There must be thousands in other cities, towns, and villages outside of Tacloban.

Now, unless Filipinos are more buoyant than other humans and equipped with gills, there must thousands washed out at sea or buried in the debris.



Strategies:

Ptr. Paul Chase in New Life Alabang is in Samar now with two trucks and a new team. Three trucks are now unloaded, and except for what we need at base for the evacuees, all of it is distributed already.

During this next coming week we will have a more detailed plan on how to continue helping, distribute relief goods and rebuild longterm.

Having five churches in these areas with trusted pastors, we will use them as centers of help and the work of rebuilding lives and homes. As we progress, our readers will receive detailed updates with pictures of those who will be supported by this group (mercy2asia).



Since New life and the "mercy2asia" group can't help everyone it is important that we are led to make the right decisions. I have not personally had enough time to meet directly with many of the victims besides pastors, leaders and those already evacuated, but we will do that on the next trip.

To start with, my hope is that we can afford to spread the money donated into five parts.

1. Immediate needs like food and water for the victims still in the disaster areas.
2. Give to the New Life relief work operations directly for the expenses of operating the "base" with evacuees and distribution, which is very expensive. New Life has invested in generators, chain saws and lots of other tools needed to help clean up.
3. Help some of the families that had their (owned) homes destroyed. It's hard to rebuild when they don't even have a job to go to and any money. *(I personally hope that this group can adopt at least two or three families in Tacloban and follow them for a year or two!)*
4. Help families in squatter areas (shanties) set up make-shift homes. After all, they are not expected to rebuild what someone else owns.
5. Make sure kids have what they need to go back to school as they resume classes!

I pray:

Let us not forget this people when media and international organisations leave for other assignments and operations around the globe! For sure New Life is on to this as long as it is needed.

Your donations are now in process of being transferred to our New Life (Baseco) checking account since our visa limits the amount that can be withdrawn every week. At the time when Erik left for Tacloban, only a few thousand had reached the account.

As of today we have received 531,000 pesos.

Even though this money is not yet spent, we are already in the relief operation through our partnership with New Life and we decide together where it can be of best help. Thus, also respecting that some of you don't just want it to go into the "big bucket".

My trip expenses for this first trip have not been covered by your donations but by ourselves, from one donation tagged for "personal expenses", along with support from New Life Alabang.

Our next trip is still pending due to no available plain tickets! Most likely Kjersti and I are going anytime between December 1st and 14th.

You all, family, friends, groups and churches deserve special thanks for your quick response. God bless you!

With Love and respect, Kjersti and Erik

For further support:

Our account number can be found [on the M2A page](#)