

OPERATION TABANG

TYPHOON

YOLANDA

Nov. 16-19, 2013 and Dec. 17-19, 2013

Initiated by the

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF CAMARINES NORTE

in cooperation with

Philippine Red Cross – Camarines Norte Chapter &

Department of the Interior and local Government - CN

INTRODUCTION

Super Typhoon Yolanda hit the central Philippines on November 8, 2013 that almost wiped out the Visayas Region, so to speak. Its devastation had took thousands of lives; countless injured individuals; huge damage to properties and infrastructure; misplaced workers; broke transportation and communication lines thus making the stricken areas isolated; left its victims homeless, penniless, starving, struggling.

The mass destruction left by the typhoon had almost made our beloved Visayan brethren fall on their knees, hopeless, helpless. But as true Filipinos who never stoop down to any crisis and challenges, they stood tall and wrestle down the obstacles brought by Super Typhoon Yolanda. And they are not alone in this journey.

Shortly after this horrible disaster, Filipinos here and abroad exerted their utmost efforts and extended support and assistance to our distressed 'kababayans'. Our neighbor countries joined hands and provided food, medical and infrastructure directly to the hapless typhoon victims.

But the baloney of it all, the most disastrous calamity to have hit the world for many decades ago, have strengthen the edifice of unity and cooperation among international communities in their efforts to help the victims stand from the ruins left by typhoon Yolanda. This somehow ignited the spirit of volunteerism amid global political diversity; opposite cultural belief; lingering territorial issues and conflicts, among others.

The Province of Camarines Norte led by Gov. Edgardo A. Tallado never faltered in its humanitarian responsibility to lend a hand to its 'kababayans' by initiating the Operation Tabang to provide help to Typhoon Yolanda victims. This was made possible in cooperation with the Philippine Red Cross-Camarines Norte (PRC-CN) Chapter and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

PREPARATION

PHASE

In an effort to somehow rekindle the flame of 'bayanihan' spirit burning among Camarines Norteños and reawaken the good Samaritans within us, Gov. Edgardo A. Tallado issued Memorandum No. 131113-01 enjoining all local government units; officers and employees of the provincial government; national government agencies; government-owned and controlled corporations; public and private schools; socio-civic and religious organizations; local media, and all concerned to actively support and provide assistance for the 'Kilos ng Bayan' Project.

The said project was initiated by the Provincial Government in its aim to encourage any and all Camarines Norteños to lend a helping hand to our fellow Filipinos in need. This was the governor's earnest and sincerest appeal to the sense of charity and empathy of everyone by donating cash, clothing, food, water, medicines, etc. The Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO) and the Radyo ng Bayan were

A separate Memorandum for provincial government officials were issued cancelling the celebration of Provincial Capitol's Christmas Party, and enjoin all employees to contribute instead to the relief operation.

On the part of the provincial government, the governor ordered the release of P900,000.00 for the Medical and Relief Operation to Central Visayas, and mobilization of Team Camarines Norte in going there. Said funds released out of the QRF-LDRRMF for CY 2013 were authorized by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan through Resolution Nos. 407 and 414-2013, respectively.

Additional P500,000.00 was released out of the 2013 General Fund to augment the stocks of food packs, mineral water, medical supplies, and other items for distribution to typhoon Yolanda victims.

The Team Camarines Norte conducted its initial meeting on November 13, 2013 to ensure the smooth and systematic flow of Operation Tabang for Typhoon Yolanda victims in Samar on November 16-19, 2013.

At the Office of the Governor, the next day, Nov. 14, the team coordinated with the concerned departments/divisions of provincial government offices as well as other private partners.

On Nov. 15, volunteer groups and individuals helped in the repacking of relief goods consisting of rice, noodles, bottled water, used clothing, etc. that was conducted at the Camarines Norte Agro-Sports Center. The medicines and supplies needed for Team Camarines Norte's medical mission were also prepared.

On the same day, the final briefing for relief operation in Samar on November 16-19, 2013 was held. In coordination with Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Region 5, Team Camarines Norte was assigned to conduct relief and medical operations in Basey and Marabut, Samar.

Accordingly, the final organization of Team Camarines Norte was organized composed of PRC-CN being represented by Ferdinand Salvador Q. Ferrer; Provincial Health Office (PHO) - Acting Provincial Health Officer Dr. Myrna P. Rojas; HEMS (Health and Emergency Medical Services) headed by Dr. Philip Luis Palencia, Dr. Ramon Echano and Dr. Paul Luis Palencia of PHO; DSWD/PSWDO - Acting PSWD Officer Cynthia R. dela Cruz; Motorpool - Reynaldo Lelis; Media Group - Radyo ng Bayan and Bay Radio; Electrician - Grant Aurin; DILG Provincial Office - PD Edwin Garcia, and the Sangguniang Panlalawigan/Vice Governor's Office led by Vice Gov. Jonah G. Pimentel.

Consequently, various committees were created along with the identification of their corresponding responsibilities.

Creation of committees, delegation of responsibilities

As agreed, PNRC-CN will serve as the commissariat and will be in charge in water supply, radio communication and public address, and delegation. The General Services Office (GSO) shall provide generator set including wiring and electricity. The transportation, mobilization and tent preparation will be the responsibility of the Motorpool/Provincial Engineer's Office.

Vice Gov. Pimentel served as the advance party together with DILG PD Edwin Garcia whose department's task is to provide security and conduct coordination with relevant offices and personalities.

The attendance, documentation, and sanitary and hygiene needs of delegates for the 3-day Operation Tabang were assigned to DSWD/PSWDO while the safety and security operations were designated to PDRRMO.

At 12 o' clock in the afternoon of November 16, PRC-CN conducted an emergency meeting for the task distribution among the Team Red Cross, to wit: Commissariat - Dir. Jude Hernandez; Delegation List - Richard Saman; Radio Communication - Matt Jenno Balce; Public Address - Eric de Castro, and Water Supply - John Francis Iglesia. The group's final briefing was held at 1 p.m.

Advance party deployment

The advance party deployment was headed by Vice Gov. Pimentel and DILG PD Edwin Garcia who had made earlier arrangements with local government officials of Basey, Samar.

At 2 p.m. of Nov. 16, 7 dump trucks loaded with relief goods and medical supplies and paraphernalia were deployed along with 2 L300 and 2 Navarra vehicles, 1 police vehicle, 1 AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) truck, 1 rescue vehicle, and 67 composite members who took part in the said Operation Tabang.

The team reached Camp Ola in Legazpi City at about 8 p.m. which serve as the staging area for all relief efforts going to Matnog Port in coordination with the AFP and Philippine National Police (PNP). At around 9 p.m., the team jumped off from Camp Simeon Ola and headed to Sorsogon-Matnog Port.

On 17 November 2013, the team led by Vice Gov. Pimentel arrived in Matnog Port, Sorsogon at about 5 a.m., and jumped off from Allen Port, Samar at roughly 6 o'clock in the evening. *LORENA DELA TORRE-IBASCO*

RELIEF OPERATION & MEDICAL MISSION

After the long, strenuous travel by land and by water; Team Camarines Norte finally reached Camp Lukban in Catbalogan, Samar on Nov. 18 at approximately 3:30 in the morning.

In close coordination with AFP officers, assistance was extended to Team Camarines Norte who proceeded to Basey, Samar. The team was divided into 5 groups to ensure that the 24 barangays of Basey, Samar will be reached and served.

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Relief operations, increased collaboration

Volunteers of PRC-CN facilitated and assisted in the relief operations in identified beneficiary barangays in close partnership with PSWDO and PHO. The said humanitarian activity had encouraged increased collaboration between and among government and private organizations who voluntarily give their time and effort to be of service to their 'kababayans' in need.

Of the 9,720 relief packs brought by Camarines Norte team, 500 were turned over to PRC, hence, 9,720 families received relief packs of food and non-food items. This was aside from 1,495 packs of used clothing which was distributed too.

During relief operations in 24 barangays in Basey, Samar, 7,925 families were served, broken down as follows: 1) Tinagoan -370; 2) Cambayan -121; 3) Amandayehan-180; 4) San Antonio-800; 5) Palaynay-610; 6) Mercado-185; 7) Loyo-570; 8) Baybay-220; 9) Buscado -290; 10) Anglit -150; 11) Iba-151; 12) Lawaan-450; 13) Sulod-403; 14) Basiao-325; 15) Catodman-245; 16) San Fernando-400; 17) Balud-479; 18) Binungtuan-152; 19) Magallanes -220; 20) May-it -130; 21) Cab-abay-480; 22) Tingib-310; 23) Bacubac-250, and 24) Can-manila -434.

Medical mission, mending subdivision

During the said humanitarian mission, medical services were given to countless individuals of distinct individual, social, religious, and political

persuasions, thus, mending the barriers of subdivision and strengthen the spirit of cooperation between and among Filipinos and other nationalities.

The Camarines Norte Medical Team led by Acting PHO Dr. Myrna P. Rojas had provided a variety of medical interventions to 701 individuals, broken down as follows: acute respiratory infection -106; acute gastroenteritis -23; skin rashes -15; headache -13; infected wounds -41; numbness of extremities -1; toothache -2; abdominal pain -8; diabetes -3; lacerated wound and removal of foreign object -5; pregnant (consultation) -1; fever -41; chest and back pains -11; lumbar pain -1; fungal infection -30; insomnia -2; neonate (consultation) -3; hypertension -18; consultation service -118; confined with IV fluids -14, and 245 individuals were given multi-vitamins.

The Camarines Norte team delivered medical services in their makeshift mobile treatment area cum registration/triage corner. Personnel of PHO and HEMS gladly served the typhoon victims amid the burning heat of the sun and stinky surroundings caused by decaying cadavers scattered all over the calamity-stricken district. Those in charge of the medical dispensary booth patiently assisted the typhoon survivors who queued for free medicines and vitamins.

Restoring family link, rebuilding lives

Family-oriented as we are, Filipinos, the PRC-CN initiated the Restoring Family Link Program or RFL to assist typhoon affected families in tracing their missing relatives and families. Its purpose is to help reunite families being separated by super typhoon Yolanda vis-à-vis rebuilding their lives.

The said initiative was done in close coordination with PRC Operation Center at Tacloban, Leyte comprised of different chapters and delegation from national societies.

Aside from this, concerned GSO staff provided free CP charging that kept the communication lines open thus strengthening links of typhoon victims with their families, relatives and friends alike.

Departing is returning

The Operation Tabang Team of Camarines Norte may have departed the area on their way back home via Camp Lukban, Catbalogan, Samar, but their leaving the typhoon-affected area means returning back soon to lend a helping hand to our beloved 'kababayans'.

At around 8 a.m. of November 19, the team travelled back to Camarines Norte and was able to arrive home at 2 o' clock in the morning of November 20.

The Operation Tabang of Camarines Norte being spearheaded by Gov. Tallado will conduct another relief operations in other parts of Samar, Leyte particularly the underserved and unserved areas.

The 'Kilos ng Bayan' Project which was launched on Nov. 13, 2013 continues to gather and receive donations from the community. The Sangguniang Panlalawigan headed by Vice Gov. Pimentel has complemented this effort by deploying manpower and transportation to collect pledges for used clothing.

Additional P500,000.00 was released out of the 2013 General Fund to augment the stocks of food packs, mineral water, medical supplies, and other items for distribution to typhoon Yolanda victims.

The Team Camarines Norte is tentatively set to go back to Samar before the end of 2013 for its 2nd round of relief distribution and conduct of stress debriefing.

Action not reaction

True to his promise, Gov. Tallado directed the PSWDO here to lead the province's second wave of relief operation in Leyte Province on 17 December 2013 to somehow help ease the burdens of typhoon 'Yolanda' victims. This accentuates the governor's firm observance of his slogan of governance, "HIGIT SA SALITA, GAWA!". He puts into action his desire to lend a hand and not merely shows his reaction to the infinite devastation brought by 'Yolanda' in our 'kababayans' in Leyte.

Accordingly, the Team Camarines Norte led by Acting PSWDO dela Cruz headed for Leyte on said date aboard the 8 trucks and 1 pick-up vehicle.

After almost 24-hour travel, the group reached the town of Palo, Leyte at around 9 o' clock in the evening where they were welcomed by Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Officer Paul D. Mooney and staff of PSWDO Leyte. They were likewise acknowledged by no less than Leyte Gov. Leopoldo Dominico L. Petilla who expressed his utmost gratitude for the continuous support and assistance extended by the Provincial Government of Camarines Norte and its people. The governor also requested the team to directly deliver the relief items to its target beneficiaries in the towns of Palo, Pastrana and Sta. Fe.

The Team Camarines Norte was also lucky to have met Secretary Carlos Jericho L. Petilla of the Department of Energy who led the ceremonial switching of electricity in certain parts of Leyte. Now DOE Sec. Petilla had served as Leyte governor for three consecutive terms from 2004-2013.

The following day, Dec, 18, the group was divided into three where each group was assigned 2 trucks each which were loaded by more or less 70 sacks of family packs and 200 packs of assorted clothing which they separately delivered in the 3 municipalities as mentioned above. They were able to distribute around 4,150 family packs of relief items.

Per recommendation of PDRRMC Leyte, Team Camarines Norte handed over to the Command Center of Leyte Province the 2 sacks of rice and 20 sacks of remaining assorted relief goods like bottled water, noodles, and canned foods still unpacked.

The relief items given away included the several sacks of a mixture of clothing, food packs and hygiene kits being collected by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan from our generous 'kababayans' through the initiative of Vice Gov. Jonah G. Pimentel.

This was aside from Gov. Tallado's call for all Camarines Norteños - rich and middle class, professionals and non-professionals - to take part in the accumulation of various relief items which the Team Camarines Norte had given away to victims of 'Yolanda' as an expression of love and compassion rather than mere sympathy. **LORENA DELA TORRE-IBASCO**