

Typhoon disaster relief work by District 3860 and 3310

Here, I wish to briefly report on disaster relief work done.

In response to the Typhoon Bopha disaster in the Philippines on 4th December 2012, R.I. district 3860 Governor Peter “Perok” Rodriguez made the Rotary Club (RC) Tagum North the lead club to spearhead and coordinate all disaster relief activities in Mindanao. So, the nerve centre for the relief operations is based in the city of Tagum (also for ShelterBox team). With 8 or 9 other RCs within their region, they conducted relief operations non-stop in the first few days – purchasing food and bottled water, sorting, re-packing, distributing, and even cooking for the affected victims.



In the meantime, our Rotary friend PP Jesse Tanchanco from the RC of Loyola Heights visited the disaster zone, and along the way met DG Perok. On 9th of December, he helped us hand over to DG Perok a small amount of Peso 100,000 (~RM7,6000) from the disaster fund raised from district 3310 for the earlier Manila floods.

You well know on 6th December, our District Governor Lee Kong Hwee sprung into action and urged Rotary clubs in the district and individuals to donate to a fund-raising campaign to help the disaster victims. In a few weeks, many RCs and individuals generously donated to a tune of RM98,830.

Fortunately, on 17th January, 2013, the collected money, equivalent of Peso 1.3 million, was remitted to a disaster fund set-up under the auspice of DG Perok with a clear responsibility that the cash has to be used only to meet the most urgent needs of the affected people in the disaster zone.

On 24th January 2013, DG Perok would organise and lead a relief mission to distribute food items to 2,300 families in five remote Barangays (villages) in the

badly ravaged area of Compostela Valley. A week earlier, I was invited to participate and I went to join in the ground work. On that morning, more than 30 Rotarians from the three local Rotary clubs -- namely RC Tagum North, RC Tagum, RC Tagum Golden L.A.C.E.S. -- and their Rotaractors gathered in Tagum city and proceeded in a convoy of eight vehicles with a big truck carrying the packed food worth about RM50,000. It was a 2-hour journey through the hills and into the Compostela Valley, needing local guides to lead us in the last lap.



DG Perok

With local volunteers helping in the local churches or chapels, the affected families were gathered. In an orderly manner in each village, one family member was nominated to receive a food package in a plastic bag that consists of 3 kg of rice, four packs of dried noodles, a pack of milk power, 4 cans of beef, and some medicine. It should feed for 2-3 days depending on the number of household members. The mission took the whole day to carry out the food distribution. And all the recipients felt grateful for the gifts.



However, the team soon discovered in one village there were another 600 families who were left out. To appease all, the team leader AG Bong promises the missed-out community to return and provide the same food packs on another day. Peace is achieved.

On the way back, Rotarians saw more relief work being carried out by others. More than ten other local and international aid agencies were busy distributing food on the side streets and village chapels. Tents (including 1203 ShelterBox tents) were put up in selected camp sites and on high ground for the homeless.



Rotarians took time to visit the so called ‘ground zero’ in village Barangay Andap, New Bataan, where the whole community was swept away by flash floods and boulders raining down from the mountain killings a few hundred families. A memorial platform has since been built there.

In the same evening, I took the opportunity to speak to the three RCs in Tagum city on the topic of disaster relief management and offered some tips which I hope can become useful for a country that is so disaster-prone.

The next evening, the same Rotarians were back at work in the nerve centre to pack food for the remaining 600 hundred families.

Such is the Rotary spirit to help -- Bravo!

I am grateful to all in the district for lending a hand. Thank you very much.

By PP Dr Ho Loon Shin
Chair of Disaster Relief Committee