

BLESSINGS

1st Quarter 2011

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF OPERATION BLESSING PHILIPPINES, INC.

Asia



RELIEF
that restores
HOPE

Because We Care

Dear Partners



Operation Blessing was at St. Bernard, Southern Leyte to distribute rice, food, and other relief goods to flood and landslide evacuees.

There is no better housewarming gift than the company of old and new friends during our recent open house and volunteers' day. It was held at our bigger and better office in Pasig City. The place was brimming with enthusiastic people ready to partner with Operation Blessing. If you are one of those who attended, I personally thank you for joining us in celebrating God's big move in OB this year.

Truly, when we do the Lord's work together, we can expect amazing blessings to overflow. It is He who enlarges our capacity and our hearts to take on new tasks, like the exciting things we're expecting this 2011.

We aim to bring more holistic and transformative programs to the BayaniJuan community in Laguna. We want to introduce Jesus to more kids by producing vacation Bible school materials localized for Filipino children. This year is also going to be a year for the Visayas region as we plan to launch mobile dental and surgical clinics, more medical outreaches, and, ultimately, a satellite office in Cebu.

We look forward to busy yet fruitful days ahead, because we know that our "labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58), and the same thing goes for your wonderful partnership with us.

May our Father continue to bless you as you continue to transform lives through this ministry.

In Christ's service,
Kim April Pascual, m.d.
KIM APRIL C. PASCUAL, M.D.
Executive Vice President and
Chief Operating Officer

RELIEF that restores HOPE

Early this year, Operation Blessing partners helped launch simultaneous relief missions from Luzon to Mindanao.

While most of us welcomed 2011 with merrymaking and aspirations, many of our *kababayans* felt as if their hope for the new year was abruptly washed away.

Torrential rains last January overwhelmed many parts of the country. Provinces in the eastern section of the Philippines were worst hit as the tail end of a cold front triggered heavy flooding and landslides.

As thousands of families began pouring into evacuation centers, Operation Blessing Foundation Philippines (OB) joined in the nationwide effort to quickly respond to the needs of evacuees.

Simultaneous OB relief missions were launched in Albay, Leyte, Samar, Agusan, and Surigao, with teams carrying not only bags of goods but warm smiles and a message of hope.



New Website Look

If you love reading Blessings Asia, we've got more heartwarming stories of lives we've touched on our newly redesigned website. You can also check out the latest news and events, sign up as a volunteer, watch featured videos, and donate to Operation Blessing through the site's safe and secure online giving page. Visit www.obphil.com now!

Return to St. Bernard

Five years after the infamous landslide in 2006 that obliterated one of its villages, St. Bernard town in Southern Leyte is now a model community that is always prepared for rescue and relief.

Upland residents like Elisea and her neighbors were thankful they were airlifted to safety when landslides almost isolated their village. But their ordeal didn't simply end there. With intensified rains keeping them longer in evacuation, securing safe drinking water became a problem.

Elisea and her fellow evacuees were relieved when Operation Blessing returned to St. Bernard with its mobile water purifier station. And though other agencies brought in their purifier units as well, Elisea insisted on getting her drinking water from OB.

"Bumabalik kami kasi alam namin na talagang safe ang tubig ng OB," she said. "A million thanks to Operation Blessing for their free purified water that we need for drinking every day."

OB has dispensed 18,290 liters of clean drinking water for St. Bernard's

evacuees. It also teamed up with the municipal government and Jesus is Alive Church to distribute rice bags and food items to 280 hungry families.

Going the Extra Mile

Aniceta and Simplicio's rickety wooden home was no match to the unabated rains in St. Bernard. They evacuated sooner than their neighbors before their house finally gave way to the strong gush of water flowing down the mountain.

They had no one else to turn to but their Pastor Oligario of Jesus is Alive Church. He wholeheartedly let the old and weary couple stay at the church's Sunday school hut indefinitely.

With their home gone and no family or relatives to take care of them, Aniceta worried terribly for her husband, whose prostate problem of unknown nature took a heavy toll on his health.

Operation Blessing took notice of

their plight and literally took the extra mile to bless them beyond the usual relief goods. After having them checked up at a nearby health center, OB shuttled the elderly couple to a private clinic a town away. The doctor found out that Simplicio has an enlarged prostate, and gladly endorsed him for a free surgery.

"In all things, God has shown that



OB took the extra mile by sponsoring medical checkups and medicines for evacuees Aniceta and Simplicio.

He is there, He is alive! He has shown in our lives that He has not forsaken us," said Aniceta in her outpouring of gratitude. She also availed of the checkup sponsored by OB and received free medications for her urinary tract infection.

"My thanksgiving overflows towards Pastor Oligario and his wife because of their kindness. I can always lean on them, ask their help, and they, too, have not forsaken us," she added. "I also want to thank OB. I never thought that God will touch someone so we can finally have a checkup."

Compassion in Times of Need

Similar relief efforts were conducted by OB teams in towns in Albay, Northern Samar, Agusan provinces, and Surigao del Norte. A total of 895 affected families or more than 4,700 individuals were provided with rice, food items, clothing, and mats. In Albay, 562 evacuee families availed of free doctor's checkups and medicines in a series of medical missions.

All of these we were able to accomplish because of your partnership with Operation Blessing. More than these efforts, your generosity has also brought back the hope that is lost in calamity-stricken communities, where the love of Jesus and your compassion are needed the most.



Elisea, an evacuee in St. Bernard, insisted in getting her ration of safe drinking water from Operation Blessing.



Doc Kim Now On Air

In partnership with TransWorld Radio Philippines, Operation Blessing's EVP and COO Dr. Kim April Pascual hosts a five-minute health segment titled "Aral Para sa Buhay" in TWR's weekly Tagalog program *Ilaw ng Pag-asa*. She delivers your weekly dose of medical and health tips for the whole family. Catch it every Saturday at 7:30 p.m. on your local Radyo Natin FM station. You can also listen to its podcasts on www.twrphilippines.org or www.obphil.com.

ON THE FIELD

A Chance to Show Compassion

Disaster relief teams are forever changed by their experiences.



When calamity strikes, Operation Blessing goes on “disaster mode.” Eric Carodan, an OB livelihood trainer, knows this well. So when he was immediately dispatched to Isabela to bring aid to Typhoon Juan victims, it didn’t come as a surprise.

Uprooted trees, roofless houses, and ruined buildings met Kuya Eric and his team in Isabela, and they already knew what has to be done. Children needed feeding, families needed shelter and medical attention, and houses had to be rebuilt. It would take more than a week to help the

people and make a lasting difference.

For Kuya Eric, one family stood out. Angelito and Edna Yadan’s house in Barangay Lapogan was flattened by the storm. With their five children, they were living in a temporary shanty with a plastic sheet for a roof and blankets for walls. One of the kids, polio-stricken Jennifer, sat feebly on her worn-out wheelchair without proper clothes on.

Kuya Eric made sure the Yadan family received their share of OB relief goods, while Jennifer’s wheelchair is replaced with a new one from Free Wheelchair Mission. While doing all these, he can’t help but be in tears. When you do disaster relief work, it’s hard for you not to get involved.

He testifies: “I’m glad I had the chance to show compassion in my own small way. It’s a wonderful thing to know that I can be of use to share God’s love to people who seriously need it.”

Amidst Disasters YOU CAN BRING HOPE

Every year, the Philippines brave a string of calamities—both natural and man-made—bringing death, destruction, and hopelessness to many communities.

OPERATION BLESSING RESPONDS TO THESE CRUCIAL TIMES WITH EMERGENCY AID AND DISASTER RELIEF PROGRAMS. OB quickly addresses the immediate needs of affected families by providing food items, mats, blankets, clothing, and toiletries. When rations run short in evacuation centers, OB is there to serve hot meals to hungry evacuees and dispense gallons of safe drinking water through its mobile water purifier.

Often, OB disaster response teams are the last to leave affected areas, making sure they create long-term and lasting change. Doctors are brought in for medical checkups of evacuees. Volunteers and residents work together to clean and rebuild their communities. And to help survivors carry on with their lives, OB provides trauma counseling, livelihood opportunities, and, on a case-to-case basis, assistance for reconstruction of damaged houses.

But the key to overcoming any disaster is preparedness. Help us be one step ahead before disaster strikes when you partner with Operation Blessing.

HELP US DISTRIBUTE MORE RELIEF GOODS with your gifts in-kind. You can donate blankets, mats, clothing, toiletries, eating utensils, and non-perishable food (i.e., canned goods, coffee, milk, noodles, rice, and biscuits). Call (02) 477-7806 to arrange for drop-off or pick-up.

HELP US DEPLOY MORE DISASTER RESPONSE TEAMS with your monetary gift. Visit www.obphil.com and click TO GIVE to learn how you can donate via bank, credit card, postal money order, or through our partners: M. Lhuillier Kwarta Padala, Globe GCASH, or SMART Money.

HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN TIMES OF TRAGEDY. If you want to offer your time as a disaster response volunteer and bring relief that matters, sign up the online volunteer form on our website, or call us at (02) 477-7802 to 08.



Operation Blessing’s New Home

As a big start for 2011, Operation Blessing’s Philippine headquarters expands its capacity with its new home! We are now located at C-5 Road corner Corporal Cruz Street in Bagong Ilog, Pasig City. With a bigger warehouse and spacious offices, OB is all set to accommodate an ever increasing number of goods and supplies for its various projects and programs all over the country.

CHANGED LIVES IN CAMARINES NORTE

Camarines Norte serves as the gateway to Bicol, one of the most resource-rich regions in Luzon yet remains poor, mainly due to frequent typhoons and natural calamities. Despite the province's abundance in resource, many residents still have a hard time making ends meet and have little access to basic services.

That is why OB's weeklong outreach in Camarines Norte last year was a spark of

hope for many Bicolanos. Wells were installed in 10 villages, 12 wheelchairs were given to people with disabilities, 19 families were entrusted with microenterprise projects, and more than 2,700 residents of the municipalities of Jose Panganiban and Vinzons were given free medical, dental, surgical, and optical services. Camarines Norte is thankful to YOU, our dear Operation Blessing partner!

HEALING

Milagros' Miracle

She came to the medical mission for medicines, but came home with a miracle.



Milagros traded her walking cane for a miracle at the medical mission.

I don't believe in miracles, but you made me believe," Milagros Ablaneda, 54, said when asked if she knew the meaning of her name.

Milagros has been dependent on her wooden cane for the last seven years. She has gouty arthritis that triggered her difficulty in walking.

"Upon observing her condition, it would take months of therapy and rehabilitation before she can walk normally," said Rex Guinaran, M.D., an OB volunteer doctor during the medical mission in Barangay Matango in the town of Vinzons.

But after Milagros prayed with a pastor, she stood up and walked around by herself without her cane.

"I examined her again. I was really surprised!" Doc Rex testified. "She can now walk fast as if nothing happened."

"Maybe the Lord really knows that we don't have money to pay for my therapy, so He decided to answer my prayer in a special way like this!" Milagros said in tears. "All things are possible if we learn to believe!"

MICROENTERPRISE

New Livelihood for Arnel

From perilous mining to making delicious *kakanin*



Arnel (2nd from right) receives ingredients and utensils for his new *kakanin* business.

For 10 years, Arnel Siguiza explored every nook and corner of caves in search of gold.

But if there was something he knew so well about mining, it was the peril of the job. So when a chunk of rock fell hard on his head, cracked his skull, and left his body almost paralyzed, he knew his mining days are over. He was left jobless without any other means to support his family.

"Gold used to keep my family alive. But with my condition, I'm clueless how to start earning again," Arnel lamented. But things changed when Operation Blessing visited his barangay. Not only did he avail of free medical services, he also received an unexpected blessing.

OB entrusted a *kakanin* business package to Arnel's family, complete with cooking utensils and ingredients. They consider this microenterprise project a great gift from God.

"We've wanted this for a long time. This is like a dream come true!" exclaimed Arnel. "God heard our prayers after all. Now we won't have to beg from our neighbors. Thank you!"

WHEELCHAIR

Rolando's Hope on Wheels

Trading a wooden stool for a wheelchair

Walking has been a painful struggle for Rolando Buatis since 2007, when a stroke left half of his body almost immobile.

"I suddenly fell, and I couldn't walk straight anymore," he recalled. For support, he uses a wooden stool to get from one point to another.

Though his eldest daughter manages to take good care of him, this still distresses Rolando. "I don't want to be a burden to her. She already has a family of her own."

To alleviate Rolando's plight, Operation Blessing gave him a wheelchair from Free Wheelchair Mission. He suddenly broke into tears. He had no idea he would be extremely blessed. He looked up to the sky and kept praising God. "Thank You, Lord!" he exclaimed in between sobs.

Now Rolando only has to sit on his new wheelchair and his son will simply push and take him places. He was blessed with not only a wheelchair but also a new lease in life.



This wheelchair from Free Wheelchair Mission is an answered prayer for Rolando.

REUNION

A Simple Wish Granted

All Judy wants is to be reunited with her father.

Judy (not her real name) is a bubbly girl from a poor village in Abra. When she was younger, she was separated from her father who was imprisoned for murder charges. On her eighth birthday, she was excited to spend her special day with her father at the provincial jail, only to find out he was transferred to New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa.

On her 12th birthday, another bad news broke her heart. She was discovered to have fourth-stage brain cancer. She underwent a series of operations in Manila, but as a result, her body was severely weakened that she could barely walk.

She spent Christmas at Child Haus, a halfway house for indigent children afflicted with serious illnesses. There, a team from The Edge Radio met Judy and asked for her Christmas wish. Judy simply answered, "I wish to see my father."

OB helped The Edge Radio make her wish come true. It was a beautiful daughter-and-father reunion. Judy and her father cried tears of joy as they hugged.

"I haven't seen my daughter in a very long time," the father with downcast eyes yet full of gratitude.

Once more, Judy sat on his father's lap and listened to his heartbeat. But more importantly, she found a father in Jesus, who made her seemingly impossible wish a reality.

MICROENTERPRISE

Seed of Hope

A livelihood opportunity helps a father begin anew.

"My life was a mess before. I was an irresponsible father to my kids," Romeo Barrameda confessed. He was a former drug user whose life was radically changed when he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romeo and his wife Linda rent a house in Payatas where they take care of their four children. "I really pray hard for a blessing to come so that I could fully provide for my family," he said.

His desperation did not last long as Operation Blessing responded to his family's needs. OB provided seed money to help him start a small-scale business selling fish in their community.

YOUNG SURVIVOR

Road to Recovery

Thanks to you, a nine-year-old burn victim receives crucial and immediate medical assistance.

We met Shella Mae Marcelo in Ilagan, Isabela during a medical mission for typhoon Juan victims. She suffered third-degree burns after a lighted gas lamp accidentally fell on her body.

Operation Blessing immediately rushed her to a private provincial hospital, then to the Philippine General Hospital in Manila for a major skin surgery and treatment.

Now Shella Mae is on the road to recovery. Her surgery and therapy were a complete success. She returned home in time to spend Christmas and the new year with her whole family.

Her mom Marimel is very grateful to the people who helped her daughter, and to OB volunteers who visited them

at the hospital every day. Their presence and encouraging words helped them get through the whole ordeal. But Marimel learned something more important:

"I learned that God is true. It is impossible that He won't listen to our prayers. He knew we don't have any money to pay for Shella Mae's hospital bills or even just for the medicines, but here she is now, treated and feeling much better."



Shella Mae (second from left) with her family is grateful to you, our partners, for helping her see hope beyond her tragedy.



Within three months, Arnel's fish business became a thriving source of income for his family.

"When this business becomes successful, my wife doesn't need to leave home just to take care of other families' children," Romeo said. "I want to give my wife and my children a good future."

Romeo worked hard, and within three months, his profit from his microenterprise is now enough to sustain the needs of his kids.

He says, "We are so thankful to Operation Blessing for providing us capital. You have made a difference in my children's lives and mine. Thank you for trusting me! Thank you for putting hope in our hearts!"

You too can make a difference in someone else's life, call us at (02) 477-7802 or visit www.obphil.com.



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