

From Halifax to Talim Island, Philippines: A breeze of generosity for flood victims By Clarence M. Batan



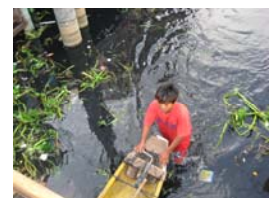
ONE HUNDRED FIFTEEN FAMILIES from the flood-affected fishing village of Barangay Kasile, Talim Island, Binangonan, Rizal, Philippines benefited from the \$1,085.00 CAD donation, which I generated from the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University. There were also friends, both known and unknown to me, who sent donations upon learning about this fund-raising initiative. For this, I am so grateful for the

trust and generosity of people who took part in this project.

The community relief project was implemented last October 29-30, 2009 through the assistance of Mr. Jefferson Aquino, a colleague from the University of Santo Tomas, and the leadership of my local research assistants, Ryan Daita and Carol Ceremonia. For three weeks, I facilitated the money transfer and preliminary coordination with the local community officials and volunteers through online banking, emails, text messaging and online chats. The implementation of the project was delayed due to two storms (named: Parma & Ramil) that immediately followed the destructive *Typhoon Ketsana* (local name: Ondoy). Again, these typhoons brought heavy rains and winds to Rizal province; making travel to Talim Island unsafe.



Unfortunately, the day after the implementation of the community project, October 31st, the fourth typhoon, *Mirinae*, hit the Philippines and dumped more rains, which worsened the flood conditions of the minor fishing ports in the villages of Talim Island. Some low-lying houses in these fishing villages are expected to be submerged under floodwaters until the first quarter of 2010, when the summer season kicks in.



BUT I know that the people of Talim Island are resilient. On many occasions, I witnessed how they recovered from natural and human-made disasters. I was pleased to note that our community project was implemented on the ground through the leadership efforts of my local research assistants, Ryan and Carol, with the help from the church, and youth volunteers.



In implementing this relief project, the most difficult challenge was delivering the 22 cavans of rice (one cavan = 50 kilos) from the mainland to Talim Island. To protect them from flood waters, the cavans of rice were wrapped in big plastics, and then loaded to a small floating cargo known as “lampitaw”, pushed by a fish porter who was soaked in waist-deep polluted lake water. These cavans were carried by foot and then loaded in the banca (boat) bound for Barangay Kasile. Five fish porters were hired to carry out this transfer.



From the mainland, the banca travelled for an hour to Barangay Kasile. Because the local fish port, barangay hall and basketball court were flooded, the cavans of rice were carried up the hill by barangay security officers to the newly built multipurpose hall and chapel. The next day, October 30, Ryan and Carol gathered the volunteers to repack the rice equally to 115 families. As soon as repacking was finished, at about 2:00 PM, Ryan and Carol distributed the rice to the community. Each family received 10 kilos of rice.





I was told by Ryan and Carol that the distribution of rice started and ended with a community's prayer of gratitude for all those kind persons from Halifax who showed solidarity in this time of crisis. Prayer was Talim community's way of saying, MARAMING SALAMAT PO! (Thank you very much!). The local barangay official also sent a handwritten "thank you letter" for the kindness and generosity of unknown Haligonian friends.



NOW THAT CHRISTMAS IS APPROACHING, I know that the adverse effects of typhoons and floods will be more felt by the families in Talim.

SO, I AM THINKING OF HAVING A SIMPLE CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR THE CHILDREN OF BARANGAY KASILE. AND IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS INTERESTED IN JOINING ME IN THIS ENDEAVOUR, JUST GIVE ME A SHOUT.



MORE PHOTOS ARE AVAILABLE IN THIS LINK:

<http://picasaweb.google.ca/clarencebatan/FromHalifaxToTalimIslandCommunityReliefProject#>