

Philippines Darkest Hours

A report from

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Philippines Darkest Hours Earthquake in Bohol and Cebu

It was Tuesday the 15th of October and most of the people were at their own home as it was a national holiday. Good thing it was.

On this day, I and my family took time to stay in bed as there were no work and school. At a tiny background from the outside of our community we could hear whispers of the birds, voices from happy children playing and the sounds of radios from the neighborhood. We felt it was a normal day aside from being a national holiday.

Around 8:12 a.m., we have started to feel a slight to heavy tremor. I stood up and looked around the four corners of our room trying to feel its movement until it became unbearable and unstoppable. The devastating strength and its overpowering sounds made us clueless. Walls and ceilings as if they were thin papers that easily bends and sway. We wanted to run out from the house but we have agreed to let the tremor subside. At this point all we could do is pray and cover our children for protection just in case our ceiling will give in. As the quake gained its momentum everyone outside were panicking, shouting, screaming at the top of their lungs, children were crying and dogs were barking. It was a very scary moment that no one is exempted.

As the tremor has slowly weakened its strength, we stood up immediately and carefully divided our immediate responsibilities. My wife took our children along with her as I took my wallet, our cellular phones for communication purposes and turned on our wifi connection so we can log in to the net to seek further information of the earthquake. The series of event happened so quick that one can't remember the series of happenings. Fortunately we have successfully got out from the house unharmed.

Right then we have started sending text messages to our friends and families asking their status and also started to browse in the internet for information. Immediately we have found out that the quake has reached to 7.25 magnitude in Bohol while in Cebu it has reached as high as 5.4 magnitude and in this scenario we were very attentive to any announcement for Tsunami.

According to official reports by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), 222 were reported dead, 8 were missing, and 976 people were injured. In all, more than 73,000 structures were damaged, of which more than 14,500 were totally destroyed – source Wikipedia.

After receiving text messages and information from Bohol - where it badly hit, all we could do at that moment was to hope that everyone can recover. My wife which clan is from Bohol knew right then that there were relatives who were affected by the tremendous earthquake. She proactively asked for little help among her group of friends. Fortunately the little help grew unexpectedly. With this positive response we have decided to extend our relief goods to non-relatives as well.

In cooperation with Sprach Institut's CSR program, friends from Canada, Malaysia and locals have decided to give donations in cash and goods. We have segregated and packed it for few families in Bohol. With the help of my father-in-law, the relief goods have arrived in Balilihan, Bohol safely. We have ensured that our relief goods will be distributed to recipient directly and fortunately it did.



Philippines Darkest Hours Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan)

While we were still experiencing aftershocks, a super typhoon has been formed a thousand miles away from Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR). It was named Haiyan. Everyone was talking about the typhoon from Radio, TV News, Newspapers, offices, on the streets and even in our very own home.

On November 2, the Joint Typhoon Warning Center (JTWC) began monitoring a broad low-pressure area about 425 kilometers (265 miles) east-southeast of Pohnpei, one of the states in the Federated States of Micronesia. Moving through a region favoring tropical cyclogenesis, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) classified the developing system as a tropical depression early on November 3. Subsequent intensification resulted in the JMA upgrading the system to a tropical storm and assigning it the name *Haiyan* (Chinese: 海燕; literally "petrel") on November 4. Tracking generally westward along the southern periphery of a subtropical ridge, rapid intensification ensued by November 5 as a central dense overcast with an embedded eye began developing; the JMA classified Haiyan as a typhoon later that day. By November 6, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) assigned the storm the local name *Yolanda* as it approached their area of responsibility. Intensification slowed somewhat during the day, though the JTWC estimated the storm to have attained Category 5-equivalent super typhoon status on the Saffir–Simpson hurricane wind scale. Later, the eye of the typhoon passed over the island of Kayangel in Palau. On November 7, Haiyan attained its peak intensity with ten-minute sustained winds of 230 km/h (145 mph) and a barometric pressure of 895 mbar (hPa; 26.43 inHg). Six hours later, the JTWC estimated Haiyan to have attained one-minute sustained winds of 315 km/h (195 mph) and gusts up to 378 km/h (235 mph). – Source Wikipedia.

Early on November 7, 2013, the Visayas Area including Mactan Island, Cebu where I am physically located has been declared a holiday. A No Work and No School Zone have been literally disseminated by our government officials all over the radios, text messages and other forms of communication. A strong recommendation by the officials to those people who are living near bay and seaside areas which are prone for possible Tsunami's to evacuate immediately. Unfortunately, some have refused and held their grounds.

In a midst of a clueless waiting of Yolanda to hit Visayas, all I could think of is to draw our own survival plan just in case we will be hit directly. When one is clouded with fear, one can only think of worst scenario. My wife and I have made tremendous debriefing and brainstorming. The first thing we have decided was to rush into the supermarket and buy matches, candles, charcoal, canned goods, bottled water, sachet powdered milk and cookies enough to feed us for three weeks in case the city will be shut down by the storm.

As part of our survival plan, I have checked our roofing and tightens its loosen nails, windows, and cleared drainages for possible water overflow. All of our electronic gadgets where secured in plastic bags, unplugged all our low level electric outlets. During its preparation the only remained live at home was few lines of electric to power up lights and wifi connection and our presence of mind.

Around 5 p.m., we have constantly sending text messages to our friends and relatives from Bohol and Leyte areas. A friend has confirmed that a part of their roofing has flown away. Strong winds has started to gain its motion as Yolanda nearing to hit Leyte.

At 2040 UTC on November 7, Typhoon Haiyan made landfall in Guiuan, Eastern Samar at peak intensity with ten-minute sustained winds of 230 km/h (145 mph) as measured by PAGASA. The JTWC's unofficial estimate of one-minute sustained winds of 315 km/h (195 mph) would, by that measure, make Haiyan the most powerful storm ever recorded to strike land. Interaction with land caused slight degradation of the storm's structure, though it remained an exceptionally powerful storm when it struck Tolosa, Leyte around 2300 UTC. The typhoon made four additional landfalls as it traversed the Visayas: Daanbantayan, Bantayan Island, Concepcion, and Busuanga Island. – source Wikipedia.

During the early dawn of November 8, we were awakened by huge storm roars that echoed even in our sleeps. I have immediately checked for any possible roofing leakages and water overflow. So far everything was still intact. Around 8 a.m., storm Yolanda (Haiyan) has gained its strength and continued to cross all along the Visayas area. Calmness however over powered the community as the voice of the storm has strongly tried to break ones silence. At 9 a.m. plus minutes that I could not exactly remember, typhoon has hit our place in Mactan, Lapu-lapu, Cebu. Few minutes the storm hits, electric power were cut-off and all I could think of was that, “the time has come”. Yolanda’s strength was so strong that once could hear even in a closed door. Roofs were squeaking, trees bending and thunderous voice of wind.

On November 9, we have thanked God that my family were safe and no major damages has been encountered at home. Immediately we have sent messages to all friends and families. Unfortunately, most of the communication in Leyte, northern part of Cebu and some areas in the Visayas were down. All we could do at that time was to hope everyone's safety.

All we have thought that everything was alright until TV reports and text messages were circulated. Tacloban and Guiuan were severely hit. All along we have all thought that Cebu was spared by the devastating claws of Yolanda. The time has proven us wrong as the Northern part of Cebu from Bogu, Medellin, daan Bantayan, Maya, Bantayan Island, Madreijos and few Towns were also hit unexpectedly.

Seeing all the video footages it has driven us to pursue our mission in extending any help to the victims of the typhoon Yolanda. From our dearest and nearest friends, DUYAN Child Care Center, Christian Institute, friends from Canada, Malaysia, Germany, officemates and thru Sprach Institut's CSR program, we have joined hand in hand to create relief goods for the victims.

First stopped was in Bateria, Daanbantayan. **Daanbantayan** is a municipality in the province of Cebu, the Philippines, occupying the northern tip of Cebu island. According to the 2010 census, it has a population of 74,897 people. Malapascua Island is part of the jurisdiction of the municipality of Daanbantayan. We have provided 147 relief goods packs for 147 families. We knew it was not enough. So we have still continued our journey.

My wife was one of team who journeyed to Bateria. While on the road en route to the location, she took her cellular phone and started to take some shots for documentary purposes. Streets were barely accessible, water supply was very minimal, food at stalls and grocery stores were either swept away or closed.

Along the road people were waiting for food or relief goods to be distributed. Unfortunately not all at that very moment received assistance from our government.



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Journey to Bateria, Daanbantayan, Northern Cebu



Second and third batches of relief goods were dropped in Tapilon, Daanbantayan. It has summed up to approximately 400 packs of goods that were distributed to respective families. Each good pack contains 1 kilo of rice, 2 packs noodles, 1 canned sardines, 3 pcs. biscuits, 2 bottled water and 3 sachet powder milk.

The good thing we have noticed was that, foreign aid and other group of private individuals were already present during the darkest hours. We all know that everyone was tired but it can't be seen from our faces as most of the volunteers who have shared and helped were driven by the spirit of love and kindness.



During our forth relief campaign, we have all decided to provide housing materials instead of food. GI sheets for roofing and nails were distributed to the remote areas in Daanbantayan. Even if we have not provided all but one thing we knew, we have somehow lightened some families during rainy days and protect them from the heat of the sun.

Without the help of relatives, friends, institution and other organization our mission was never be successful.

We thank you all for all of your never ending support to our program.

