

10 YEARS AFTER.....

November 8, 2013 went into Philippine History with a sad memory. Over 6000 died in the floods, 4 Million people displaced yet 1000 still missing. Super Typhoon Haiyan, codenamed in the Philippines as "Yolanda" became the deadliest natural disaster in the history of the Philippines.

Marlene Holman, one of our front-liners in those days recalls: *"I still can remember the smell... death all around"*

A delegation of NACSEARelief made a visit to have a look at "10 years after". After all NAK-HUMANITAS of Switzerland and NAK-karitativ of Germany who they represent were in rehabilitation and relief work with unprecedented investment.

Of course the bad smell of death is long gone and people rebuilt their lives, in urban areas probably better than ever before. Judging on the number of people frequenting the two huge shopping malls in Tacloban City indeed gives the impression all is well. Yet life is still full of challenges for most Leytenianos: *"Those who survived continue to survive each day"* as Marlene, our then social worker puts it.

Numerous memorials and mass graves, have been set up that one shall never forget the suffering of these bygone days. Indeed talking to villagers revealed that the traumatic experience of that fateful November 8 is still alive in memory but Filipinos would not be Filipinos if they would not have come to terms. What a resilient people. Ever since "Yolanda" some 6 typhoons of less power have visited the area.

The biggest project accomplished was in Sitio Codilla near Ormoc. 20 sturdy houses and they all still stand today. Some beneficiary families made comfortable dwelling out of it others follow their humble lifestyle however within strong protective walls.

This brings us of course to the realization. Relief and rehabilitation bringing people back to their original life is one thing, helping them to build better infrastructure is the other and with no doubt more sustainable. Food for thought until we are called to the next disaster area. Do the one thing and do not forget the other, goes a famous saying.

Marlene described the struggle she went through and probably speaks out of the heart of many workers at the frontline in those days: *"Most of the*

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people I spoke with were in shock. 'How do you handle shock' I asked myself then. I remember having an inner panic as I felt I wasn't doing enough to help the people around me. People told me their experiences, and every one sounded the same, yet each one was a personal story.....today, I live a different life, family and professionally I did not stand still but the humanitarian work ten years ago changed my outlook, learned to see the bigger picture and see the massiveness of needs while at the same being sensitive enough to notice small things. Humans are humans. When basic needs are not met, there will be a disconnect between others and humanity as a whole. It is also at moments like this when listening to needs is essential"

Professional organizations, and countless NGO's flocked into Leyte from all over the world. Enormous work was done, solidarity from Christian- to Moslem and Budhist organization, governments, local, national and international were part of re-building. At NACSEARelief we tried to identify those who have not been reached by anybody. Usually the ones not along the main roads.

Building a village for a Christian community, re-building public schools, livelihood assistance, medicines, equipment for health care stations. The list is long, we are not bragging but giving account, last but not least to ourselves.

"We feel humble pride to be part of a team that goes to the grassroots and starts working from there towards community" summarizes Marlene her reflections.

Disasters come, and come again affecting thousands of lives. "Yolanda" was followed by other storms. Memorials are build. the names are written on huge tables yet start now fading. The souls live on and that for ever. Should we not all always learn from what nature wants to tell us?

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