

# Philippines - Fighting many battles: Tri-People Solidarity after typhoon Washi, An Update

Sunday 22 January 2012, by [AMEROL Khye](#), [Duyog Iligan](#), [MANDAR M.L.](#), [NEYRA Isboy](#), [OBENDECIO Burt](#), [RDRRAC](#)  
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## Duyog Iligan joins Higaonon Tribe ritual

**18 JAN.** As Tri-People advocate, Duyog Iligan joined the call of the Higaonon tribe for the Interfaith Prayer and Indigenous Rituals for a Safe Iligan at the junction of Bayug and Kapai River in Barangay Digkilaan, Iligan City on January 14, 2012. Some twenty five responders coming from different institutions and a Press Freedom photographer participated the activity.

Duyog Iligan volunteers departed from RDRRAC command center at 9:00 AM to witness and to be in solidarity with the events. Aside from the people from the locality there were also representations from the City Local Government Unit and other personnel from NGOs.

Big tent, flaglets standing on the pile of rocks and platform were all up to witness the ceremonial rituals. Bits and pieces also ready and believed to have been setup ahead of time by Higaonon community leaders - participants other than tribal leaders were just merely observers. The richness of textile of colors - red (warriors), white (peace) and black (power) were incredibly noticeable in the area. In deserted vicinity, as remains of SENDONG's (Tropical Depression Washi's) devastations, on the riverside, which connects Bayug and Kapai rivers, Higaonon's personal choice that considered to be sacred and perfect venue for offering's. One of the community leaders also explained what they called "Diwata's" (environment fairy's) to which they believe to be spiritual being that protects the environment.

The "Higaonon" tribe believed the presences of spiritual beings as protector of their environment. Their culture includes "Pag-Halad" or literally ceremonial offerings to these beings; they have been practicing this kind of rituals since time immemorial. In solidarity, RDRRAC Duyog Iligan team observed and contributed to the said rituals. Tribal leaders let the participants wrote down their names on a paper as their exclusion for whatever fatuitous events that shall happen in the Iligan and in the country in general. An interfaith prayer was then followed not exclusive for Higaonon but this time with the participation of prayers from Muslim, Protestants, and for Roman Catholic believers participated in the said event.

In general, the ritual overall objective is to ask forgiveness to remorseful violations of mankind to their environment. Shared lunch subsequently served after the said ceremony.

## **RDRRAC-Duyog Iligan provides psychosocial support**

**14 JAN ILIGAN CITY — The Ranaw Disaster Response and Rehabilitation Assistance Center (RDRRAC), Inc.**, through its Medical/Health/Psychosocial Team, had offered the second trauma-healing services on January 12, 2012 for the Internally Displaced Individuals (IDPs) of Typhoon Sendong who evacuated formerly at Manga Elementary School but now transferred to Laville Gym in Tubod, Iligan City.

As one of the partners of RDRRAC for DUYOG ILIGAN campaign, the Yapak artists shared their talents to ease the psychological burden heavily carried by the evacuees in the gym. They were welcomed by the energy boasting smile and heart-felt gratitude of the children. The IDPs, especially the young ones, were very excited while the Yapak artists were installing the instruments for the acoustic presentation and film showing. A thirteen (13) year-old excitedly uttered, “Yehey! Magpasalida again!” (Yehey! Film showing again!). Before the movie started, the Yapak artists entertained the kids with jolly songs and serenade and the evacuees with meaningful and encouraging melodies. Afterwards, the film viewing has finally started from 8:00pm and ended at 9:45pm.

No one among the IDPs in the said evacuation center was not traumatized by the devastation brought about by the typhoon. According to Sofecia, a 43 year-old mother, “Di gyud malikayan nga matulala ko tungod sa nahitabo” (It can’t be avoided that I just get shock because of what happen). In behalf of all the evacuees there, she was extending her greatest appreciation to the efforts of the young artists in helping lighten the misery experienced. She added that she had nothing more to ask for because she and the others already feel contented with the happiness they get from the entertainment given by the Yapak artists.

This coming January 14 and 15, 2012, the same psychosocial activities of RDRRAC and DUYOG ILIGAN volunteers will once again entertain the IDPs in Laville Gym Evacuation Center. Aside from that, they will also try to offer other activities which also aim to ease the distress of the evacuees.

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## **Psychosocial Activities Continues at Laville Gym Evacuation Center**

**18 JAN ILIGAN CITY —** The Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of Typhoon Sendong who were formerly evacuated at Manga Elementary School and currently staying at Laville Gym Evacuation Center are in the healing process from the harsh effects of the disaster through the selfless efforts of Ranaw Disaster Response and Rehabilitation Assistance Center (RDRRAC, Inc.) and Yapak artists through entertaining them on January 14 and 15, 2012.

As scheduled, the Yapak artists voluntarily and continuously offered their talents in helping the IDPs o showtime relieve them from emotional distress they experienced from the disaster.

While waiting for the Yapak artists to finish setting-up the instruments, the adults were chatting as they guard their children playing. The kids were very excited to have fun again with the josh, jolly

songs and movies the artist offered. The evacuees were so excited that they immediately stopped chatting and playing when the entertainers started strumming their guitars and started to serenade them. It was even observed by a medical volunteer in the evacuation center that night, prior to the activity, the children gathered together and had agreed to go to the Yapak office for them to be entertained by the artists. It was a funny observation but sent a message that the evacuees.

On January 14, the entertainment started at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. The opening song was an encouragement for the kids to do well in their studies. After a song, the artists facilitated a game for the kids. Happiness was really painted in their face as they were laughing all throughout the game. It was not just confined to the children but also extended to the hearts of the adults, especially the parents, as they have seen their little angels enjoying. Afterwards, more songs were played. A volunteer from the City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD) and two IDPs also participated by singing their favorite musical piece. Then, a Walt Disney film showing "Tarzan" was played. It had started at 6:40 PM after Yapak gave their last hit of that night. In the following day, the group played the movie entitled "Paul".

Following the schedule, Yapak artist will provide more fun-filled activities in Laville Gym every Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday.

### **Burt Obendecio**

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### **RDRRAC-Duyog Iligan, Cayetano Senators partner in relief operations**

**11 JAN.** Through the Ranaw Women and Children Resource Center (RWCRC), a Non-Government Organization co-convenor of DUYOG ILIGAN (Tri-people Solidarity for Sendong Survivors), RDRRAC and DUYOG ILIGAN Relief Distribution team were able to tap Mrs. Ding Maridol from San Miguel, Iligan City who is the contact person of Senators Pia and Allan Peter Cayetano in responding to the needs of the internally-displaced persons (IDPs).

On January 9, 2012, the goods were served to 796 families in Brgy Mandulog, Iligan City. Most of them are home-based survivors and only eleven (11) families stayed in the evacuation center situated at the Barangay Multi-Purpose Hall. Sourced out food and non-food items were rice, sardines, blanket and malongs from the two honorable senators, Honorable Congressman Varf Belmonte and Plan International.

Barangay Volunteers also helped during the distribution and made the process more organized and smooth. During an informal sharing with some of the survivors, they expressed their gratitude to the donors and hoped for their participation in the formulation and planning especially in the rehabilitation period. At the same time, they are asking for full medical attention particularly for the children, women and aged ones.

RDRRAC and DUYOG ILIGAN continue to solicit more assistance (food, medical, financial) for the survivors in Iligan and Cagayan de Oro cities particularly those in the hinterlands and depressed communities.

### **DUYOG ILIGAN Communication and Documentation Team**

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## **Fighting Different Battles**

**18 JAN. More than three weeks passed and the damages brought by typhoon Sendong are still fresh.** Then, both Cagayan de Oro and Iligan cities were clearly unprepared and responding in a messy way that put more the survivors in difficult situation.

Hit even before by the economic difficulties brought by unemployment, low wages, uneven distribution of wealth and poor social services, neglect and denial of peoples rights and among others - natural calamities flashed out dreams of more than a thousand and almost thousand also are missing. Finger pointing to some is not good at this time but it is necessary to pinpoint the real culprits of the tragedy. It is not simply to shut down sawmills and stop logging in words but to do it sincerely and try all of those responsible for the logs and denudation of the mountains.

### **Protection and Killings**

The National Government of the Philippines have made policies to fight climate change and passed disaster prevention and management acts providing funding thereat. Looking on this is a very smart move, but, let us look at the national policy on mining and selective logging. Both actions are pointing at different ends and the most victims of these calamities are the poor and the average people not the protectors, operators and financiers.

### **Vultures Around**

With the disasters, it is logical that victims need assistance but, it should be helping them to be empowered and not just simply source of data and information. The sad situation of the survivors have been used as an opportunity for Civil Society Organizations/NGOs/INGOs to make their pockets full including those politicians that are dreaming of an elective post in the 2013 elections

### **War and Armed Conflicts**

Armed confrontations is also a possibility that is just waiting to spark. With the Aquino administrations propaganda style/approach is more inviting for a reaction, an armed reactions. Giving a hope for the rebels like the pronouncements that by the first quarter of the year a peace deal is sealed, is a way of promising a food for hungry soldiers on the ground. Without meeting of frameworks in the negotiations, war remained an alternative to deadlocks.

### **Opportunity**

Positively, this moment is an opportunity for the survivors to really come together and raise their voices and positions. Laid down their rights and agenda as key stakeholder in the process of recovery, rehabilitation and full development.

High time to propose clear program and framework for the peoples and community empowerment.

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## **Kudos to the Unsung Heroes**

**18 JAN. The deluge brought about by typhoon Sendong left a great terror to everyone.** Its unimaginable wrath to lives and properties were seen scattered all over the place. And given the somber atmosphere, Christmas wasn't that merry at all.

In another light, Sendong didn't only offer chronicles that drowned all of us into sorrow. While stories of pain, grief, and hopelessness were collected, there were also inspiring ones that can certainly stir and motivate us to rise. One of these is the commendable heroism and selflessness of the volunteers who tirelessly worked during the relief operations and disaster response activities. Some of them even refused to go home to spend Christmas and New Year with the Internally Displaced Persons. This is a superb picture that was not captured by the lens of media's camera.

Ranaw Disaster Response and Rehabilitation Assistance Center, Inc. already gathered over two hundred work forces from different parts of Mindanao that were very eager to help in the relief goods packing, sorting, and distribution as well as in documentation, medical mission, and finance generation. This institution vocally recognizes the volunteers' vital and prominent role in reaching out to the areas where the devastation of Sendong was immense. RDRRAC further highlighted the fact that without them they would have been overburdened by the piles of work needed to be done.

### **Getting to Know Them Better**

Almost a month of working with them, RDRRAC found out that some of the volunteers had their own shares of disaster to tell. It was discovered that some volunteers were also badly hit by the typhoon. Some of them confessed about their houses and properties being swept away by the flood. One shared how she fought for her own life as the flood began to devour her house. Another volunteer shared how she witnessed the struggle of the people to reach their roof just to escape from the deluge. Another volunteer who stayed for weeks in Iligan City just received news that her home was ransacked, taking away valuable properties she solely invested for years.

### **Volunteers Now Exhausted**

Many volunteers are now getting sick after offering all their energies in response to the disaster. They've barely slept and rested for weeks just to catch with the responsibilities they wholeheartedly accepted. As we sing our praise for them, it is only just that they be given care and proper attention. They must now be subject to debriefing alongside other services. This is the commensurate response for their unsung heroism.

**Isboy Neyra**

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## Homebased from 3 communities were served

**19 JAN. The Relief and Distribution Team of Ranaw Disaster Response and Rehabilitation Assistance Center (RDRRAC, Inc.)** delivered some relief goods on January 17, 2011 to the affected people from Typhoon Sendong in 3 communities in Iligan City. In the morning, the relief team went to Brgy. Bagong Silang to distribute jerry cans, plastic sheet, used clothes, malong, bioderm soap, rice, brown sugar, salt, dried fish, surf jumbo cut, mug, plastic glass, pale among the families whose house were totally damaged when the flood, brought by Sendong, engulf the area.

In the afternoon, the Relief and Distribution Team was split in to two groups. The first group went to Canaway at Brgy. Tibanga where it distributed plastic sheets, jerry cans, plastic plates (S&M), small plastic bowl, plastic glass, used clothing, blanket, malong, rice, sardines, dried fish, brown sugar, salt, noodles, surf jumbo cut, and bath soap to 20 families who are living along the seashore and were almost neglected with support. Their houses were badly struck and broken into pieces by giant logs which were carried from the mountains of Lanao del Sur into the ocean by the flood. However, according to Evangeline Jimenes, one of those persons whose house was lost after being hit by logs, relief goods had hardly reached them because the City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD) thought that they were just affected by the big waves during the typhoon and they were considered in the low priority among the victims to given with goods and services. Shouldn't the group exerted effort to demand for recognition as victims also of the disaster, they still wouldn't have received until now support and donations which they are entitled to.

The second group proceeded to Greenfields at Brgy. Ubaldo de Laya where they distributed jerry cans, malong, bioderm soap, used clothing, dried fish, and brown sugar. As the team reached the place, many people were already waiting. According to Felisitacion Jimena, one of the affected residents, "1:00pm pa lang naghulat na mi diri" (we are already waiting here at 1 o'clock). Even when the distribution did not start yet, she extend her deepest gratitude to RDRRAC for providing not only food but also non-food items which they really also need. It is the first time that they received non-food items. She added that if ever there's more to come it would be better if they will be given with blankets, pillows, foams, bed sheets and food.

Like the former team, before the distribution proper started, the team explained the process so as to make it organize and smooth. The recipients were called and had given one-by-one. All of them draw a smile in their faces as they received the goods. Every member of the team really saw how gratified the beneficiaries were with the help as they vocally said, "Salamat Kaayo!" (Thank You Very Much!).

The distribution would not be that systematized without the help of the People's Organization (PO) there, the Kilusang Kabataan (KK), a member of Alayansa ng Kabataan g Mindanao para sa Kapayapaan (AKMK) which is a part of RDRRAC in the campaign "Duyog Iligan." Acknowledgement is also due to the purok president, who is also a member of KK, because the distribution took place in their house.

**Burt Obedencio and M.L Mandar**

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**P.S.**

\* <http://rdrrac.wordpress.com/>