

# Response to Disasters: Psychosocial First Aid and Basic Health Skills Training

Mindanao Solidarity for Typhoon Yolanda Survivors

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January 20, 2014 - Barely a month without weather disturbance, Mindanao faces a new threat in the form of a Low Pressure Area (LPA) that entered the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR) on the afternoon of January 10, 2014. It was forecasted to intensify into a tropical depression in the next 24 hours after it enters the PAR and may even intensify further into a storm or typhoon. It will not be as strong as Yolanda but the likelihood of flash floods and landslides should be prepared for because it will bring a moderate to heavy rainfall in the areas of the Central and Eastern Visayas, Northern Mindanao, Caraga Region and the eastern side of Mindanao like Davao and Compostela Valley.

Despite heavy rains, the Mindanao Humanitarian Action Network Against Disasters (MiHANDs) conducted the **Psychosocial First Aid and Basic Health Skills Training** in preparation for the Early Recovery intervention for the Yolanda survivors.



The Psychosocial First Aid Training was conducted on January 15-16, 2014 at the Sumpay Mindanao Training Center, Tubod, Iligan City. Over fifteen (15) enthusiasts participated the training.

The training was conducted to respond to the growing needs of the super typhoon Yolanda survivors in Ormoc, Leyte, particularly the need for psychosocial services. The previous MiHANDs team which set sail to Leyte in the mid of December last year only brought with them five (5) psychosocial experts who also admitted that their capacities are beyond the enormity of the devastation. "The damage brought about by Yolanda doubtlessly put much stress on the people. They need not only relief goods but also strong emotional support in times like this. They need to be listened to. During our first effort, we were glad to see the kids playing again for the first time again after the disaster," said Minda Quinones the head of Psychosocial Team. "The next batch of psychosocial service providers will be staying in the area for several months."

Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) is a humane and supportive response to people who are suffering and who may need support. It involves providing practical care and support, assessing needs and concerns, helping people to address basic needs, listening and comforting, helping people connect to information, services and social supports, and protecting people from further harm. Aside from learning the principles of PFA the participants were also equipped with practical lessons through workshops and drills.

Majority of the trainees were also survivors of typhoon Sendong in 2011. Achmad Musa, the President of Iligan Survivors Movement (ISM) declared, "Before we were the victims. Now, we are part of the service providers." The participants said they felt how difficult it was being in a disaster event with all properties and lives of their loved ones gone. They are more than prepared to set aside their day-to-day responsibilities just for this endeavour.

The two-day training ended with the trainees expressing their heartfelt commitment to extend their help for the Yolanda Survivors.

On the other, a Basic Health Skills Training was also conducted on January 16-18, 2014 at LAFCCOD Office in Tubod, Lanao del Norte. It was attended by 11 female and 5 male volunteers coming from member NGOs and people's organization.

The volunteers were introduced to topics in basic first aid, herbology and Basic Oriental Medicine such as ventosa, tuina massage, moxibustion and Ear Accupuncture. Each volunteer was provided with the basic knowledge and best practices through workshops and demonstration.

## **Mi-HANDs**

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