



A UNITED FRONT

Employees, management and partners join hands to rebuild areas devastated by super-typhoon Yolanda

BPI has a total of three branches in Tacloban City: Tacloban Main on Justice Romualdez Street, Tacloban Rizal on Rizal Avenue and Tacloban Marasbaras on Senator Tabuan National Highway, Marasbaras.

Immediately after the storm, the first action the Bank undertook was to track each of the 45 employees that manned the Tacloban City branches. Everyone was located, with the last one taking two weeks to find.

BPI airlifted food, blankets and other

provisions: flashlights, medicines and generator sets to its people and their families. In the first few days when Tacloban remained in a flux, with its airport barely functioning, BPI had to use a helicopter to bring in the deliveries.

Eventually, it became obvious that the needs of the employees would have to be sustained for a longer period of time. Logistical challenges hampered the continuous sending of relief goods by air. It was far more efficient to relocate the 45 individuals and their families to the YMCA in Cebu City where they were sheltered and provided meals. When there was again a semblance of stability in Tacloban, they were repatriated.

Fund-matching campaign

BPI initiated a fund-raising program that pooled together donations from BPI

employees all over the country for the rehabilitation in the aftermath of the storm. Under the fund-matching campaign, dubbed "10M + 10M," the Bank promised to match the donations made by its employees peso-for-peso if the donation reached Php 10 million. In a little over two weeks, BPI employees raised over Php 11 million, resulting in a combined donation of more than Php 22 million, from the Bank and its employees.

The BPI Foundation also received donations from different sources from the public, which amounted to Php 10 million, for a grand total of some Php 33 million.

Of this amount, Php 10 million was allotted for building 2-storey, 4-classroom school buildings in the devastated areas. These school buildings follow the architectural plan already being used by the Foundation in similar rebuilding efforts in Cagayan de Oro. This Misamis Oriental city was hit by massive floods triggered by typhoon Sendong back in December 2011, leaving residents displaced and structures wiped out.

The houses, on the other hand, were allotted first for teachers whose houses were destroyed by the typhoon. Each house is estimated to cost Php 200,000.

The Bank has partnered with different organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and the Department of Education to specialize in specific areas of rehabilitation to put this amount to good use, rebuilding houses and school buildings in areas hit by super-typhoon Yolanda.

Repairing BPI branches

The plight of the three branches was another matter. In the event of a natural calamity, the Bank can normally reopen a branch within two to three days of sustaining major damage. Rehabilitation for the three in this case took some time because Tacloban, which faces Cancabato Bay in the San Juanico Strait, juts out from an outlying area. Bringing heavy equipment posed a challenge.

Generator sets had to be brought in as the electricity infrastructure in the area was all but wiped out. All BPI ATM machines had to be completely replaced as these had been submerged in water from the storm surge.

Marasbaras branch sustained the heaviest damage with its roof blown off, all walls destroyed, and the furniture covered in mud and wet. The Rizal branch, being near the sea, bore the strong impact of the rush of water. Tacloban Main was reopened 10 days after the typhoon struck, Rizal reopened almost two weeks after. Marasbaras as of February 2014 remained non-operational.

PREPARING FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE

In 2010, the BPI Foundation and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) jointly undertook a study on climate change and how it would likely affect the future of 12 major cities in the Philippines. Included in the study, entitled *Business Risk Assessment and the Management of Climate Change Impacts*, was Tacloban, a city along the northeastern coast of Leyte.

Among other things, Tacloban was cited for its increasing subjection to stronger cyclones, as seen from its weather history in the last five years. That it also sat barely three meters above sea level while facing the Pacific Ocean (from which most tropical cyclones come) only served to expose it to further potential risks.

Scenarios drawn by the study became reality when Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) hit the Visayas region in November 2013. It turned out to be the strongest typhoon recorded in history, with record wind speeds creating a storm surge that killed more than 6,000 people in the Philippines.

September of 2013 was the last time BPI Foundation Executive Florendo G. Maranan saw Tacloban City as it was, alive and rife with business activity. In the aftermath of Yolanda, coconut trees in once thick groves were felled like sticks. Houses were wiped out, buildings had their roofs ripped off, posts were toppled to the ground and many bodies of those who did not survive the calamity were woefully half buried in the mire. Maranan, though, notes that in spite of the havoc and the ruin, "you could still see lots of people willing to pick up from the devastation."

The BPI-WWF study is a contribution towards helping people prepare for climate change events.