



AMIHAN

National Federation of Peasant Women

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CALL FOR HELP FOR VICTIMS OF ONDOY

In the aftermath of Tropical storm Ondoy* that pummeled Metro Manila and adjoining municipalities of Rizal and Laguna provinces last September 26 and 27, thousands of families were rendered homeless. In two municipalities in Rizal province Montalban and Binangonan, where a sizable number of women farmers and fisherfolk are members of AMIHAN, hundreds lost their homes and their properties. Houses were swallowed up by the engorged Wawa river and Laguna lake brought about by the heavy rains that went on for 36 hours without let up. In Binangonan, flood waters have not receded. The government forecasted that flood waters were to remain until November. In Montalban, huge boulders and rocks that cascaded from the mountains now occupy the site of many of the members' homes.

It was providence that the floods came during daytime, and the people were awake and were able to run to safer grounds when flood waters started to rise inside their homes before their very eyes. At the height of the raging flood, one member, in a vain attempt to save their clothes cabinet, tied the cabinet to a tree, only to find out later that the tree had been uprooted taking away with it the cabinet with all her family's clothes and other belongings.

The experience was terrifying and traumatic especially for children who watched as their homes were swallowed by the engorged river. Most families have nothing left but their clothes on their bare backs. The women particularly requested for brassieres and panties in the first round of relief operations. Some were able to salvage some pots and pans and other kitchen items.

One member said: "Mostly women and children were in the villages when Typhoon Ondoy struck. Our response was to save our children and other members of our families. Never mind the belongings, we just thought that first and foremost, we have to live!"

Largely without any form of government assistance, makeshift shanties were set up by the community to temporarily house those left homeless. AMIHAN's immediate response the day after the tragedy, was the mobilization of students (high school and college level) from Miriam College and the University of the Philippines – two schools AMIHAN has been working closely with. The mobilization resulted in the outpouring of support in the form of relief goods such as rice and other food items, medicines clothes, soap, bottled water, medicines, etc. Students likewise helped in the clearing of roads made unpassable by the landslides and the repair of a wooden bridge that connects the villages to the main town.



Makeshift evacuation centers.



Two weeks after the Ondoy tragedy, the residents of the villages still have to experience official assistance. Those left homeless have started scouring around for places to build their homes within the villages, and those whose homes where some structures have been left intact, have started to rebuild. Despite their initiatives, residents voiced the uncertainty of how to rebuild their homes and their lives.

Many are already trying to resume work on their farms which was also ravaged by Typhoon Ondoy save for a few newly planted root crops. Rice plants that were already in their maturing stages were all destroyed. Where to get seeds and other farm inputs to start planting again is a problem. How to pay for the loans incurred and used for the crops that were damaged by the typhoon is even a bigger problem.



In a few more days food, especially those in the makeshift evacuation centers, will be running out. Pregnant and lactating mothers have particular nutritional needs crucial for their health and their babies.

As classes will be resuming anytime soon, children's school supplies are also needed.

Feeding program.



The lack of sanitation facilities like toilets and clean water is getting to be a nightmare especially for women. Fisher women from Binangonan are complaining of vaginal infections as they continue to wade through waist deep dirty flood waters inside their homes.

This is a call for your kind support. Anything is welcome. But we would appreciate most support for the particular needs of women and children – the most neglected and not attended to in relief operations.

Initially we can list the following: panties and brassieres, mats, blankets, rice and other food items, pots and pans, plates and other kitchen utensils, clean water, seeds, school bag and supplies for elementary school children, medicines, soaps for body and for washing clothes. Cash support is also welcome.



Community residents waiting for the relief mission.

Kindly send all donations to:
Teresita Vistro or Cathy Estavillo
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* Typhoon Ondoy's international name is Ketsana.