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Philippines solidarity

First steps in solidarity campaign with typhoon victims

- IV Online magazine - 2013 - IV466 - November 2013 -

Publication date: Saturday 16 November 2013

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On November 11, 2013 ESSF launched an initiative of solidarity with the victims of the super typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) in the Philippines. We present here an initial report on the very first steps of our campaign.

Sending of 4,000 euros

On November 13, we were able to give our bank the order to transfer 4,000 euros to the account of the RDRRAC, one of our partners in the Philippines (see below). We have set up a permanent Asia solidarity fund, which in particular gives us the means to rapidly send a small initial financial aid – an advance – while awaiting donations.

The fact that we expect the response to our appeal to be significant – by our standards at least - has also allowed us to immediately transfer 4,000 euros. In the first four days we have received more than 2,700 euros in the form of cheques and Paypal payments. We don't yet know the amount of sums received by bank transfers (the bank takes a certain time to inform us of them) nor obviously of cheques not yet arrived in the post.

The appeal has been reproduced on several sites and in several countries in French and English. It has been translated into Dutch and probably other languages; articles calling for solidarity have also been translated into Spanish. As before, our initiative has an international dimension. We will report further on the financial situation next week.

Our Philippine partners

The donations we received are sent to our Philippine partners, directly involved on the ground and with whom we have already collaborated in the past: the “Tri-People’s Organization Against Disasters (TRIPOD) Foundation” and the “Ranaw Disaster Response & Rehabilitation Assistance Center, (RDRRAC) Inc: – we worked with the latter in support of the victims of a previous deadly typhoon which had particularly affected the province of Iligan.

Faced with humanitarian disasters, our association seeks partners in popular effective activist movements working directly on the ground; giving priority to the most deprived and reducing to the minimum their own costs of functioning; working in the long term, linking emergency aid, rehabilitation and reconstruction ; promoting the self-organisation of the victims so they become actors in their own destiny and can fight the multiple discriminations related to official aid and reconstruction of the devastated areas.

We have regular links with such movements in several regions of the Philippines, but not where typhoon Haiyan has hit hardest, in the centre-east of the archipelago (notably the islands of Leyte and Samar). Tripod and RDRRAC are based in Mindanao, in the south of the Philippines. Before launching our appeal, we have thus verified that they would be able to intervene in the areas affected. This is all the more possible for them since there is a real proximity between a part of the population of Mindanao and those in the Visayas: family links, and sometimes common languages.

Also Tripod and RDRRAC have a varied experience of action during humanitarian disasters, operating in a region

characterised by violent typhoons, floods and landslides (often caused by the destruction of the forests) or military conflicts – notably between government forces and Muslim movements: internal refugees and displaced persons form part of the political reality of Mindanao.

Working with popular layers, Tripod addresses both the descendants of Christian Philippine migrants and the mountain tribes and Moros (the “three peoples” of the island), combating social, religious and ethnic discrimination and drawing on inter-community solidarity.

Sending of a first team by Tripod

That doesn't mean the task will be easy. The devastation wrought by the typhoon is so vast and the human shock so deep that the social tissue often seems ripped up. The local authorities are immobilised or spectral. The popular organizations are temporarily paralyzed: their offices are destroyed, priority is given to the counting of the dead, and the search for survival of family members.

The incredible presidential neglect does not help things. One week after the disaster, the most elementary aid only begins to arrive with an eyedropper and not yet everywhere. Tons of emergency equipment and food aid piles up in the airports while the government, which is supposed to coordinate its distribution, settles accounts among rival clans and muzzles the press so that it cannot reveal the breadth of the drama. Time passes, the situation gets worse, the risks of epidemics and insecurity mount, endangering humanitarian interventions. Rapes seem to multiply, as a symptom of social breakdown.

Tripod has already sent a first team to renew links with one of its organizations: a network of youth originally from Mindanao, living in the affected region, who have already organized some small aid actions. Now they must establish contacts with local popular movements. This team should in particular quickly choose a place which is not too dangerous from where aid, rehabilitation, and social reorganisation actions can be initiated with local partners. A second Tripod team is currently on its way.

A long haul

We are only at the beginning of a long term intervention. It is not only about distributing essential goods and alleviating suffering, but a collective work involving helping the population to overcome the social and psychological shock, to emerge from its situation of dependency, to act in a coordinated fashion rather than everybody for themselves.

Many international humanitarian organizations are specialized: emergency medicine, food aid, child care and so on. They can deploy considerable resources, save many lives, but they have no intention of remaining. On the other hand, the activist and popular networks operating at this level are faced with a whole spectrum of problems created by such disasters. Where habitations have been massively destroyed, regroupment centres should be conceived to ensure the reconstitution of social activity. They must respond to an overall question: allowing the affected communities to emerge from a situation of powerless victim – at the risk of friction with the established powers who do not look kindly on the said victims affirming their rights.

Organizations like Tripod and RDRRAC have very few resources whereas the needs are unlimited. So they must be helped now to aid the affected populations. But it is also necessary to accompany them in a more long term task.

To send donations

Cheques

Cheques in euros only and payable in France made out to ESSF should be sent to:

ESSF

2, rue Richard-Lenoir

93100 Montreuil

France

Bank:

Crédit lyonnais

Agence de la Croix-de-Chavaux (00525)

10 boulevard Chanzy

93100 Montreuil

France

ESSF, account number 445757C

National bank references (RIB):

Bank: 30002

Code: 00525: 0000445757C

Key: 12

Account in the name of: ESSF

International bank references:

IBAN: FR85 3000 2005 2500 0044 5757 C12

BIC / SWIFT: CRLYFRPP

Account in the name of: ESSF

Paypal: you can also make donations via [Paypal](#).

We will keep you regularly informed via our site [ESSF](#) of the situation and the use of the solidarity fund.