

To: Peter and Cornelia Scheid, Oswald and Abi Haan
Gawad Kalinga e.V. Germany

Dear Peter, Cornelia, Oswald and Abi,

Thank you for your immediate response to our new emergency due to Typhoon Lando (Koppu) and for your kind offer of continuing help. Here is an update.

I spent all day yesterday (leaving 6 am and getting back 11 pm) visiting Cabiao and Gabaldon. As you may have heard, Typhoon Lando (International name Koppu) was particularly destructive, because it lingered a long time and thus dropped immense amounts of rainfall. For example, in Baguio city from 8 am Oct 19 to 4 am Oct 20, it dropped 737 millimeters of rain in 20 hours, over 2 months worth of rainfall. And because it lingered 5 days, it dropped this rainfall in different parts of Central and Northern Luzon. In Gabaldon, the destructive floods came at 9 am of Saturday, October 17. In Cabiao, the destructive floods came at 1 am of Tuesday.

In Cabiao, Mayor Gloria (Baby) Congco spent sleepless nights since Sunday, Oct. 18. She worked 24 hours contacting help from our government offices for disaster response and management. Fortunately, the Air Force responded in time and later the Coast Guard. They brought speed boats, which were needed to rescue people in the rapid surge of waters at 1 am of Tuesday. For very many farmers, it has been an extremely painful event. Many of them had gone to their rice farms, in the hope that they could harvest their crop before the floods came (harvest would be in a week). But around midnight of Monday, they heard the roar of waters coming and, as one farmer said, "nawalan ako ng pagasa" "I lost all hope." 40% of the rice crops are gone and 100% of the vegetable crops.

In Gabaldon, the destruction is horrendous. As we travelled to our GK Village there, we were stunned to see several kilometers of rocks and boulders where vegetable gardens and houses used to be. This is in Barangay Calabasa, which I know very well, as it is just before our GK Village in Barangay Tagumpay. Evidently, there used to be a marble quarry in the nearby mountains and the scene is a wasteland of rocks and marble. It reminds us of the incredible power of water.

But my visit yesterday was also a story of resilience and hope. In both Cabiao and Gabaldon, GK and Ateneo have been working on RELIEF. As I emailed you earlier, we have delivered foodpacks for several thousand families and continue to do so. I was much touched by the story of our youth in our new German Village, GK St. Joseph. They have been staying in the Relief Center (at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines branch in Cabiao) helping to pack relief goods. One of our GK heads, Jon Ramos, asked them if they might feel bad because they would not themselves be receiving relief goods. But they said, "Hindi po, mas masarap magbigay, kaysa tumanggap." "No, it is a nicer feeling to give than to receive."

Fortunately, our new German Village in St. Joseph is fine. I visited there and beneficiaries, mostly from the irrigation canal you visited, are working hard and we look forward to the turnover and blessing with Ambassador Ossowski on December 21. And the rice fields around it are not so badly damaged. Some of the rice plants are down due to the winds, but I am told that they will still be 50-70% ok. The big damage is to the rice plants that went under water.

REHABILITATION: Beyond the relief work, GK and Ateneo are now focusing on providing funds for Cabiao to provide rice seedlings so the farmers can replant. Luis Oquiñena of GK and

I will meet with the Mayor next week to work out the implementation plan for this replanting work. Support for seedlings and fertilizers so they can replant is critical. They can no longer support this need on their own, as they spent everything and even borrowed for the crops that were destroyed. The sooner they can replant, the shorter the time of scarcity and hunger. If we do not help them, there is likelihood that they will lose their land (because they cannot repay their debts) and will end up becoming squatters in the cities.

In Gabaldon, the main needs that Mayor Rolando Bue expressed to us are:

1) Continuing relief for some more time as the people have no source of food for the next weeks;
2) Cash for Work. He is mobilizing the people to work on Flood Control. They learned that using cement for the flood control walls is not the most effective, because once one part of the cement wall gives, it is likely that the whole wall will fall. They will use rocks (of which they now have plenty) to build rock walls, as they are more robust. This will solve two needs: Better Flood Control and Hunger until the next harvest. He is applying to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) for this program. I am also contacting a Buddhist Foundation, Tzu Chi, which provided this cash for work after Typhoon Yolanda.

3) Planting materials for a root crop, camote (sweet potato). Much of the land cannot be planted soon for their usual rice or vegetable crops. But they can be used for camote. I have contacted the Department of Agriculture in Tarlac City, since they got this support from them in the past.

Thank you for continuing to obtain more help for our brothers and sisters in need. We will need continuing funds for relief for several more weeks and then for 1) replanting, 2) repair/reconstruction of homes, 3) the cash for work program in Gabaldon.

We will be sending you images and videos by early next week. Thanks again for your great friendship and support.

Fr Ben