



CWS

# Summer Story

ACTION AGAINST POVERTY



By Gillian Southey, CWS communications coordinator.

## When there is no Harvest

It was a storm like no other. The tallest trees swayed and then thundered down – houses, fishing boats and sheds were smashed into splinters. The gigantic waves rose and tumbled onto the land washing away everything – houses, pigs, chickens and belongings. Fidel, who watched it happen, lives with the trauma of Typhoon Haiyan which hit the Philippines last November.

“This was the first frightful experience in my whole life and I cried hard for many days because we lost our livelihood, house and belongings. I did not know how to start our life all over again,” he says. Fidel aged 33 had sent his wife and four children to the emergency shelter two days before the typhoon hit the small fishing community where he lived. He stayed behind only to see their house and animals disappear with the waves. “I had to cover myself with fallen trees and other wooden pieces because there were so many objects flying around. I was not able to save any of our belongings. They are all gone now. But I am thankful that no life was lost in my family,” he adds.

After two weeks in the very cramped evacuation centre with no electricity and not enough toilets or bathrooms, Fidel began to salvage materials. Despite the heavy rain, he soon built a makeshift shelter for his family. Living was hard, but Fidel was determined to overcome his fears.

And that’s when your support arrived. CWS had been waiting to hear how our partner, Developers Foundation, had fared. With no electricity or communications it took executive director Tet Naraval a few days to get in touch. The piggery that sustained their work had been destroyed by the typhoon as had their truck. Once they had sorted out their own emergency shelter,



Fidel Alegria and his family Photo: Developers

staff began to visit neighbouring communities to find out what they needed. For some it was food, but most wanted protection from the wind and rain. Tet sent CWS a proposal for tarpaulins, but the more staff talked with the people who lived in coastal villages it became clear it was corrugated iron they wanted as tarpaulins were soon wrecked by the elements. The appeal was upgraded to meet the people’s needs.

CWS was grateful for your help for our Philippines Typhoon Appeal. The first funds raised were immediately sent to the National Council of Churches in the Philippines who are organising a mammoth relief effort across the region. Food, bedding materials, water and other items were sent by boat and road to some of the more isolated communities. Drivers navigated fallen trees and other debris as well as bad weather. Your first gifts were also sent to Developers, who distributed roofing for 1973 houses in 6 villages. With this iron Fidel



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**“Building networks of support and water tanks is bringing hope and some security despite the drought.”**



**Children often miss school to make the long journey to collect muddy water for their families.** Photo: CCS

made a decent shelter for his family and now with help from his parents has bought a second-hand fishing boat.

Each day he takes commuters from Tabon to the township of Batan so students can go to school, take produce to the market or attend to other business. In bad weather the waters can be dangerous. Food, temporary shelter and now a means to earn a livelihood is the hope that Fidel needed. They are gifts for which Fidel is most grateful. *“Thank you so much for sharing your blessings with us!”* he concludes.

*“We have to be strong enough and have faith that everything that we lost will be returned to us again. God will use other people as instruments to help us,”* says Fidel.

**W**hile the Philippines was awash, it was an altogether different story in semi-arid south west Uganda. No rain meant no water and misery for people already bitterly poor. They walked further for water that was more likely to be contaminated or fled the district fearing for their lives. The failure of banana, coffee and cereal crops left them destitute.

Malnutrition is rising, animals are starving and with the uncertain weather, farmers are very worried for their future. Without the support of the Centre for Community Solidarity (CCS), life for the widows and those caring for the orphans of HIV and AIDS victims would be grim. Building networks of support and water tanks is bringing hope and some security despite the drought. Workshops on farming and the gift of 240 piglets, gives these vulnerable families the means to survive. According to director Charles Rwambari, the partnership with CCS, “has assisted community members to transform the way they have been living, to adjust to drought and to navigate through uncertainty.”

Knowing how best to respond in emergency situations takes skill and training. Developers and CCS draw on their experience and strong local relationships. Because they are local they are not fooled by anyone and demand fair prices for the materials they need. They have good systems in place and can make good happen.

In this they are typical of CWS partners. Their deep knowledge of their communities is something we can depend on when a super typhoon strikes or when water runs out. They focus on the people who most need help and make sure the response is community wide.

Please support our Summer Appeal so our partners can help when there is no food to harvest or protection from injustice. Times were tough for many Filipinos before the disaster – wages were woefully low and land scarce. We want to make sure the most vulnerable get the help they need to rebuild their lives better than before. ■

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Summer 2014

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**Christian World Service**

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