



ICRC/C. Lee

# NEWSLETTER

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## AFTER THE STORM: AID TO 'PABLO' SURVIVORS SCALES UP

### TURNING THE WHEELS OF JUSTICE

Caloy\*, a 43-year-old inmate at the Manila City Jail, has been behind bars since 2003. He was jailed for possession of drugs and drug paraphernalia—a violation of the dangerous drugs law punishable with a maximum of 16 years imprisonment—but his case is moving at a snail's pace.

Caloy is only one among the many inmates whose fates depend on the speed at which their cases are tried in court. Only six of Caloy's 33 hearings actually took place, and 14 consecutive hearings were postponed from 2004 to 2007. By then, he had spent nine years behind bars, away from his family.

While many cases drag on for years with no reduction in the influx of inmates, the jails are overcrowded to three times their maximum capacity.

"Lengthy detention of inmates still undergoing trial is a known major cause of jail congestion in the Philippines, but to find solutions to this challenge required looking at all angles, even outside of what the ICRC usually does," says Sébastien Bourgoin, ICRC Protection Coordinator. "It soon became clear that to address the problem in a sustainable way, judicial agencies would need to commit to work hand in hand."

*continued on page 2*

Nearly two months later, it was still vivid to 60-year-old Marco Polo Magallano how typhoon Pablo (Bopha) ripped away his roof and his livelihood in December.

"Pablo brought destructive forces: strong winds and heavy rains. It sounded like there were hundreds of planes cruising above our house," said Marco Polo, who lives on Poo island in Baganga municipality in Davao Oriental province.

His house and the fishing boats he used for a living were not spared from the impact of the typhoon, which claimed thousands of lives and heavily damaged infrastructure.

Now two months after Pablo struck southern Philippines, the need for food, shelter, clean water, and healthcare still remain among the survivors. In response, the ICRC, together with its local partner the Philippine Red Cross (PRC), have scaled up their operations in areas worst hit by the typhoon: Davao Oriental and Compostela Valley.

Amidst the massive scale of devastation, the two organizations began distributing relief food and items at the beginning of the emergency. These efforts have been continuous, totalling about 300,000 recipients in eastern Mindanao, by early February. Despite recent flooding in eastern Mindanao caused by non-stop rains, distributions are ongoing.

"We are finding every way possible to efficiently meet the needs of the people in communities worst hit by the typhoon," said Pascal Mauchle, head of the ICRC's delegation in the Philippines. "After they have already lost so much, our assistance is aimed at giving them relief for the

essentials—like food to feed their families—so they can concentrate on rebuilding their homes and their lives."

After Pablo made landfall on eastern Mindanao on December 4, about 80 to 95 percent of the worst-affected areas (Baganga, Cateel, Boston and Caraga municipalities in Davao Oriental province) were destroyed.

### ENHANCING ACCESS TO WATER AND HEALTHCARE

In Cateel and Baganga municipalities, some 19,000 persons have already benefited from the ICRC-PRC distribution stations of potable water and from bringing water to eight barangays.

The ICRC has also donated materials to help repair the damaged water systems in those two municipalities, benefiting an additional 6,500 people.

"These water stations should not only keep us away from water-borne illness, but it would also help us concentrate on rebuilding our lives," says Lanie Mandawe, 26, of Ban-ao village in Baganga. Her house was also blown away by the typhoon.

With most local health facilities destroyed or badly damaged by the typhoon, the ICRC and PRC set up the Basic Healthcare Unit in

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ICRC

continued from page 1



*Patients get registered at the busy Red Cross Basic Healthcare Unit. Because local health facilities in Baganga municipality, Davao Oriental, were badly damaged by typhoon Pablo, this facility was rapidly set up to ensure that people continued to have access to health care.*

Baganga to provide residents with medical care in the meantime.

This facility—which offers maternal and child healthcare, psychosocial support, and free medications—made it possible for medical care to be within reach of typhoon victims, said Dr. Gundula Epp-Graak, who was the first doctor working at the unit.

“Many of the patients do not have enough money to buy their drugs in the local pharmacy,” Dr. Epp-Graak added.

After opening in early January, the healthcare unit is attending to at least 100 to 120 patients on a daily basis. Most of the consultations have been related to respiratory infections, fever, diarrhea, skin diseases, and open wounds.

The ICRC has also provided construction materials to build the PRC’s advanced medical post, which is providing much-needed medical care to people affected by the typhoon in Baganga.

In Compostela Valley Provincial Hospital and New Bataan Rural Health Unit, both in Compostela Valley province, the ICRC provided materials to repair water pipelines that had been severely damaged by Pablo. It also continues to pay for 90 liters of fuel per day for the Cateel District Hospital’s generator as the restoration of electricity is underway.

### NO STRANGER TO MINDANAO

For decades, the ICRC has worked in Mindanao, including its eastern region, to meet humanitarian needs related to armed conflict.

In line with its regular activities to monitor the treatment and living conditions in places of detention, the ICRC donated building materials to help repair Montevista District Jail, which was left without water and electricity after the typhoon.

In the aftermath of Pablo, the family of Marco Polo is gradually restoring their normal lives. “We are now finding ways to fix our boats,” he said. “Nevertheless, the relief items that we received, particularly the food items, have really helped us to move on from this appalling experience caused by Pablo.”

With the typhoon resulting in staggering humanitarian needs in the longer term in eastern Mindanao, the ICRC will continuously work to bring assistance. To fund an operation of this scale, the ICRC made a preliminary appeal to donors for 10 million Swiss francs (433 million Philippine pesos) and will launch the final appeal amount in February.

“The need for assistance now and in the coming months is truly immense. Families who bore the brunt of the massive destruction are starting to rebuild, but it will be a big challenge,” said ICRC’s Mauchle. “We will continue to focus on meeting the essentials, with a view to help them restore their normal life.”

**Jesse Edep**

continued from page 1

The ICRC has been visiting inmates in Philippine places of detention for more than 60 years, and in 2007 began the “Call for Action” process to address the causes and consequences of jail overcrowding.

In November 2011, upon the request of the ICRC, the Supreme Court created Task Force: Katarungan at Kalayaan (“justice and freedom”) to monitor cases of detainees in Manila City Jail and to work towards their timely disposal. The ICRC is a permanent member and serves on the task force’s secretariat with the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology.

The task force reports to the Supreme Court Committee on the Decongestion of Jails chaired by Justice Roberto Abad, who has shown his sincere commitment to help.

“The committee has achieved several milestones to help decongest our holding jails,” explains Abad, who gives the example of the amendment to the court’s rules exempting persons from paying certain fees before they can be released. Before the amendment, he says, a detainee’s inability to pay these court clearance fees would mean continued incarceration despite the fact that the case against him was already dismissed. Now, after 10 days if the detainee is still unable to pay the court clearance fees, the court will exempt him from the fees and release him.

“The task force, on the other hand, has facilitated the release of several detainees whose trial lasted for more than 10 years for

violation of their right to speedy trial,” the justice says.

Every month the task force members meet to identify cases needing immediate attention. These include inmates detained for at least six months and with cases pending in the Metropolitan Trial Court, or detained at least three years with cases pending in the regional trial court, inmates waiting for sentencing, elderly and mentally-incapacitated inmates.

The task force profiles these inmates by taking note of basic case information, length of detention, and the number of hearings that actually took place or were reset.

After reviewing 459 “problematic” cases in the Manila City Jail male dormitory since January 2012, the task force submitted recommendations to the courts for action. The recommendations range from “immediate release due to service of maximum penalty,” “release on recognizance,” or “speedy resolution.”

Since calling attention to these cases, 64 percent have seen some action taken by the courts, including 67 inmates who have been released, 95 sentenced, and 40 transferred to prisons to serve longer sentences. Small steps to reduce overcrowding in Manila City Jail, which has an average total of 3,900 inmates despite a holding capacity of 1,100.

“Every inmate released is considered a success in favor of due process guarantees, and even a conviction sometimes comes as a relief for inmates who have been left in uncertainty for too long,” Bourgoins says.



*ICRC staff interview Manila City Jail inmates about the status of their trial proceedings. The ICRC works with the jail to prioritize cases of detainees who are experiencing overlong preventive detention. The cases are submitted for review by the Task Force: Katarungan at Kalayaan, which will then recommend action to the courts.*

“Statistics on decongestion rates could never be compared to the value of a life regained.”

In February, the task force included Caloy under the “release on recognizance or reduced bail” in its recommendation to the Manila court that handles his case. The next month, his case was heard.

For inmates like Caloy, nothing is more valuable than being given the gift of time and second chances. Caloy’s case was dismissed in April, and he is now a free man. Other inmates, however, still await what the court—and perhaps the entire judicial system—has in store for them and their future.

**Allison Lopez**

*\* Name and age have been changed to protect the individual’s identity*





*Oliver Villahermosa gets tips on how to increase the productivity of his mung bean farm in a conflict-affected community in Guihulngan.*

## COMING BACK AFTER CONFLICT IN GUIHULNGAN

In the late 1980s, some residents of Negros island in central Philippines felt the brunt of the cycles of conflict. The people did not have much to eat. They had difficulties sustaining their farms and other sources of living.

Oliver Villahermosa, who depended on planting corn to feed his family, found life at the time was really difficult. “We didn’t know how we could survive,” the 51-year-old farmer from Tacpao village in the municipality of Guihulngan says in his native Cebuano dialect.

For decades, Oliver left his more than one hectare of land uncultivated and never had a constant source of income. “It was unsafe to go into farming because it was chaotic all over the area,” he shares.

Even though it is much more peaceful now in Guihulngan compared to a few decades ago, Oliver still experiences the lack of development in his community. He points out that his family still does not have access to all basic services and sustainable livelihoods.

Responding to this need, the ICRC has assisted about 2,400 families in five conflict-affected villages in Guihulngan—Tacpao, Trinidad, Planas, Banwague and Binobohan. Since last October, residents have received high-quality seeds, carabaos, rice threshers, and other agricultural tools like shovels and pick axes.

“The assistance program is intended to support the livelihoods of the people in these conflict-affected communities and improve their overall farm productivity,” says ICRC agronomist Russell Herrera.

The ICRC has also long been carrying out several humanitarian activities on Negros island such as providing relief to civilians affected by conflict between government troops and the New People’s Army and visiting captured combatants.

### BACK ON HIS FARM

Oliver, a recipient of mung bean seeds and farming tools, has now returned to cultivating his more than one hectare of land for over five hours a day.

This assistance will help him get his feet back on the ground, he says. “Our lives will be back to normal again because we can generate our own income.”

On Negros Island, the vast majority—some say at least 80 percent—of the population is involved in the agriculture industry. Rice, vegetables, sugarcane, corn and coconut are the principal products grown in this part of central Philippines.

Ploughing vast areas of land has been made easier following donations of carabaos to certain farmers.

Gorgonia Sandot, 40, another Tacpao village resident, explains that “Erning”—the name she gave to her carabao—and the agricultural hand tools provided by the ICRC will definitely make farming easier. “It will speed up our work,” she says.

For Dyna Baquilta of Trinidad village, the superior quality of rice seeds she received paves the way to have more income so she can help her four children finish college. “The assistance is such a relief,” says Dyna, 39, who has been farming rice for 19 years.

For their part, local authorities aim to make the lives of farmers easier by bringing buyers to the community to eliminate the transportation cost of going to the market. Trinidad village captain Melbourne Bustamante says, “We have to support them because farming is really important to them,” he says.

### EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Aimed at enhancing livelihoods, the ICRC projects in these communities are based on a community participatory approach. The beneficiaries are involved in identifying and designing the assistance and are placed at the heart of the decision-making process.

“It was the right thing to ask farmers to propose what resources they want,” Bustamante says. “In return, the farmers decide or make policies on how to make their resources or tools sustainable and functional in the long term.”

In the nearby village of Planas, despite losing their livelihoods and properties due to the massive landslide in February last year, the residents have shown resiliency and remain empowered to restore their self-sufficiency. Many survivors in the village have been living in tents since the disaster.

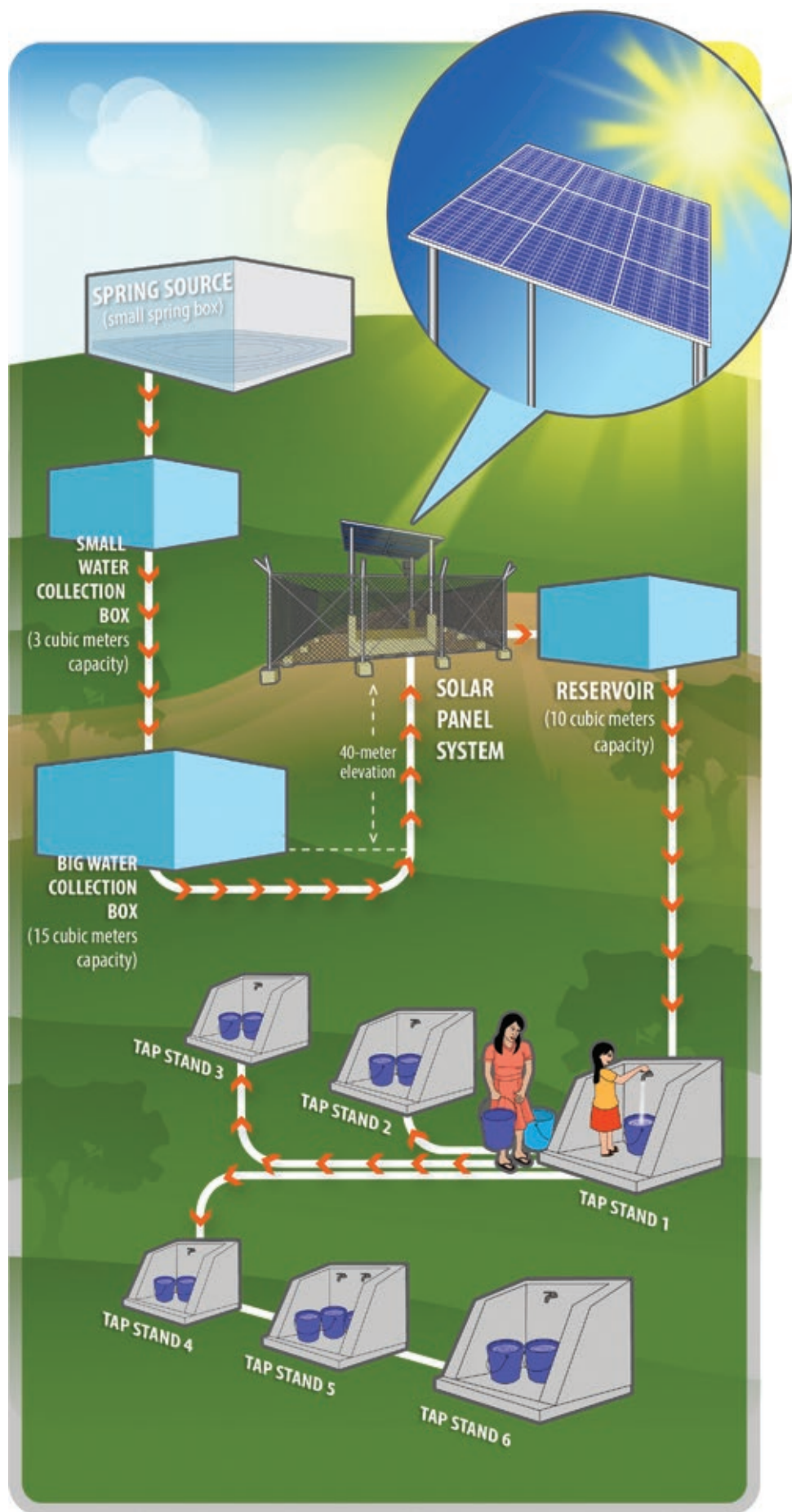
The entire farming population of Planas is working hard to get back on their own feet, says Larry Toting, 46, who saw three-quarters of his farmland covered by the landslide.

“We should survive this challenge,” he says full of optimism. The earnings from the harvest of mung bean seeds he and his wife received will go towards eventually rebuilding their house.

# A CLOSER LOOK: KALAKACAN- BALATIKAN SOLAR WATER PROJECT

In the remote rural villages of Kalakacan and Balatikan, North Cotabato, the ICRC built a small-scale water network powered by solar energy. This water distribution network, with 6 tap stands and 7 faucets, is now providing clean drinking water to 50 households with around 300 individuals. In the past, villagers had to walk an average of half an hour to fetch water from a spring.

A solar-pumping system was chosen for its simplicity and cost efficiency. Using solar panels, energy from the sun is converted into electricity that is used to power the system, pumping water from a spring and distributing it across an almost 1,800 meter-long pipeline. The illustration explains how this system works.



## CAPACITY BUILDING FOR EMERGENCIES

Now in its second year, the ICRC continues its program to provide focused support to selected priority Philippine Red Cross chapters prone to violence or armed conflict, disasters, and other emergency-related incidents. In 2013, these are the PRC chapters of Negros Oriental, Northern Samar, Sorsogon, Albay, Quezon (Lucena), Lanao del Sur, Surigao del Sur, Bukidnon, Agusan del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, Davao Oriental and Davao City. This support includes facilitating the set up and training of Red Cross Action Teams to be ready to respond in times of emergency. Last year, the selected chapters were Sulu, Basilan, Cotabato, Compostela Valley, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, Zamboanga Sibugay, Mt. Province, Abra and Ifugao.

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