



Window into World Mission

The Vulnerability of Poverty

March 2014

This month's featured letter was written last November by Cobbie Palm, who serves with his wife Dessa in the Philippines. This is a shortened version, but you can read the entire letter at <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/palm-cobbie-2013-112/>

Typhoon Yolanda remains very present in our lives as each day the death toll rises and institutions that were once able to offer help are forced to close. As of November 2013, the death toll had risen to 5,235 with 1,613 still missing, and 23,501 under treatment for wounds, infections, illness and other injuries related to the typhoon.



The reality is the sad awakening that poverty is vulnerability. The question has been raised many times about why so many people and families living in the 555,514 homes that were totally destroyed, many of whom are now counted among the dead, did

not evacuate. The answer is poverty. These houses are simple *nipa*, bamboo houses with no metal locks or grills on the window to protect the very few special items inside. These families had worked years to pay off or may still be paying for the one television set or the coveted stove oven in the home. To leave the home could mean the possibility of losing everything, not from the storm but from a break-in robbery. The loss would be so much to these families and would be devastating. This is the vulnerability of poverty.



Bethany Hospital, set up by Presbyterian Mission in 1918, which has served the region with healing for 95 years, had to temporarily close. This hospital, which had lost most of its equipment and had suffered so much damage now can no longer maintain the salaries of employees. It was left with no option but to close for a period of rehabilitation. Volunteers are set up and functioning in the parking area of Bethany Hospital with tents and are responding to the flow of patients, but this is not a sustainable solution over time. This is the vulnerability of poverty. Silliman Water Ministry, a project to provide clean drinking water to communities in need, is presently constructing portable water filtration systems and will send the first unit this week to filter the well water of Bethany Hospital, where larger and larger crowds are gathering for treatment.

People are finding their ways to survive, but it is fragile and desperate and often dependent on outside institutions and organizations. The road to recovery will be sure, but long and winding. Your prayers and support will continue to be our

strength.

**For more information about supporting mission co-workers serving
in Presbyterian World Mission,**

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