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Dear Friends,

As most of you are aware, the Visayas Region of the Philippines, the island of Cebu and more specifically, the Lingap Center suffered a direct hit from Super Typhoon Rai (*locally known as Odette*) on Thursday, December 16. The storm roared ashore with sustained winds in excess of 160 mph and gusts exceeding 200 mph! (*A super typhoon is equivalent to a category 5 hurricane*). The kids and staff had been working on Christmas planning and preparations when all of their excited anticipation and decorations were literally blown away. It was a terrifying day and night for the kids, who described the storm as sounding like “a herd of horses running on the roof for hours and hours!”



People who had nothing, lost everything but hope.

Fortunately, our two buildings are very well built, utilizing cement block construction. As a result, the Lingap Center itself sustained minimal damage other than the loss of most of our mango and coconut trees and a few broken windows. Our losses were merely ‘things’ that are easily replaced. However, not everyone was as fortunate. Hundreds on the island lost their lives. We were very happy that we were able to provide shelter to some in the community who had lost their homes and were able to make it to the Lingap Center during the worst of the storm. We thank God that none of the kids, staff or our sheltered visitors were injured. I have said so many times that the Lingap Center is a miracle and I continue to believe that it’s true. God clearly had His hands over the Lingap Center and continues to watch over the kids. Remember, we were narrowly

missed by Typhoon Yolanda a few years ago! Adding to an already difficult situation, it rained for days after the storm. Homes with no roofs and people with no place to go suffered immensely.

One of our staff members lost his home. He and his family had to crawl out from under the mud and rubble during the height of the storm. Other staff members had extensive damage to their homes as well, but I am extremely proud of all of them! Their commitment to the children is incredible. In spite of their hardships, they continued to report to work in accordance with their regular schedules at their own initiative, after working on their own homes in their off hours while living with relatives.

The Center was without water for a number of days, but we do have a well that they were able to convert to manual operation so they were able to get by. City water was restored about a week and a half later albeit on a very limited basis. Electricity was finally restored to the Center on January 5. However, it will be many weeks or months before people out in the province have electricity. Communication towers were destroyed so cellphone and internet connections are very challenging to say the least.

At the Lingap Center, we were finally able to clear away the debris that was blown onto our campus from neighboring homes, such as roofs, building



The kids were able to get water from our well.

materials and our own downed trees. With the restoration of electricity, things are slowly starting to return to a limited state of normalcy. But it will be long time before things are really back to normal. The schools sustained extensive damage, losing academic records and much of their already limited resources. All of this is on top of an already 'covid-confused' two school years.

The kids have already begun replanting the garden, which had been completely destroyed. This is critical in view of growing food shortages and skyrocketing commodity prices. Our greater worry at this time, however, is that due to the heavy rains, stagnant water can be found everywhere. This has led to a proliferation of mosquitos, which carry the potentially deadly dengue fever. To help combat this, we have purchased mosquito netting for the children.



Our campus was filled with debris and downed trees.



The Lingap kids are going to be OK!

I have been receiving a lot of questions asking what we need. The answer is that the staff and kids at the Lingap Center are going to be ok. Life will be a challenge for some time to come, but what we really need most at this time, are prayers.... and a lot of them, not necessarily for our Lingap family, but for all of the people of the Visayas! Thanks to all of you, the Lingap Center is a place of unconditional love, safety and security that was a gift that you have already given to us. As mentioned, many others have not been as fortunate. They are the ones who now need our collective prayers but bear in mind that Filipinos are a resilient people. They will get through this adversity, but it will take time.

As I was trying to wrap my mind around all that has taken place at the Center and the surrounding area, I remembered something that Mister Rogers (*Fred Rogers*) once said, which helped me to put it all into perspective:

***“When I was a boy and I would see scary things
in the news, my mother would say
‘Look for the helpers. You will always
find people who are helping.’ ”***

I believe that there are children alive today only because of your gifts. Thank you so much for being our HELPERS! The impact you have had on the lives of so many is immeasurable.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of John Drake.

John Drake