

Service: typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda victims & Brightening Biliran

November 13, 2013

During the time span of the 2nd of November till November 11th, the tragic disasters of Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines took place. On the 13th of the month, a few days after the disaster placed an end to its damage on our country, the whole class of IB I of the European International School Manila left for the British School Manila in order to assist with relief goods packing to later on send to Red Cross.

A lot of bags were packed for the victims, all packed with the necessities such as cans of sardines, instant noodles, water, rice and personal care products that follows: soap, shampoo, one toothbrush and toothpaste. Initially, the same amount of each item was added to each bag to make it fair for all families that received the relief goods. However, after a few ours, some of the supplies ran out. Considering the ethical implications, this made it unfair for some of the families who were to receive the relief goods, however, it was better than nothing and we just added as much of the supplies to the bags as possible towards the end.



November 19, 2013

Today a few of my classmates and myself drove to Puregold Bicutan, a supermarket nearby our school, in order to buy the necessities for relief goods that will be delivered to the victims of Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda. On our trip, we bought water, soap, detergent, canned food and instant noodles.

The goods were then packed into the cars and brought back to school, where we later packed them with the help of a lot of other students.



above: discussing the plan as a group before packing

The class of IB I has decided to create a project called Brightening Biliran, in which funds and relief goods will be sent to the victims of Typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan living in Biliran. This region is very near to the most affected areas of the typhoon and since most of the media just mainly covers on the most victimised places, we decided to give help to the families which did not receive as much relief goods as others.

In order to fundraise money for the project, we sold waffles in school in the course of two weeks. The class was divided into a few groups – some of us were cooking the waffles, others preparing them and some taking the orders.



above: me preparing a waffle to be sold

After our class's fundraising with the addition of funds accumulated from donations and the European International School Manila, the goods to be packed were bought on one day and the whole class pitched in with the packing. As it was Christmas season and a typical holiday meal here in the Philippines is spaghetti, each bag contained 1 kilo of spaghetti with sauce. We also added 4 bars filled with fudge, one pack of cheese, a few packs of coffee, one plastic bag of oil and laundry soap. Each family received one bag and 500 pesos.



above: a classmate and myself (right) unloading the relief goods





above: classmates and myself packing the relief goods



above: our class done with the relief good packing

Before Christmas vacation, myself and a few other helped to finalise the packing and bring all of the plastic bags outside of school to later on put in the cars for the shipment. All in all, we had enough bags to support 150 families living in Biliran.

Within these few months, a lot of local calamities occurred. It was a great issue throughout the Philippines and news was all over the media. Through these projects, I realized how hard families across the country were hit by these disasters and how much they were suffering because of it. I recognized the lack of help from all over the world and this is clearly an aspect that should be globally improved in the future. I definitely managed to make my empathy grow and now try to help people more often in these ways. These activities also improved my cooperation and collaboration with others. I also learned how to incorporate their thoughts and ideas more often and do what is best for the whole group. I appreciate this learning experience for myself to a great extent and genuinely believe this helped me to grow as a person. Now I see myself as a person in the world who can make a difference and I believe that with more people doing such projects, we could improve society in a countless amount of ways!

Service: KIM (Kids International Ministries)

November 2013:

All around the world, issues of global importance can be found. In the case of the Philippines, a developing country, it can be spotted even more often. Kids International Ministries is an organization in the country which aims to break the cycle of poverty. This plays a very large role in our society and with a continuously increasing population, appears close by very often.

Having the opportunity brought upon me by a classmate and friend, I drove with two other people from school and a few adults to an orphanage in Antipolo, in the province Rizal, Philippines. There, we went to an organisation called KIM (Kids International Ministries). I brought one kilo of rice to give in the kitchen in order to add to the rest of the food. The orphanage recently finished the building of their pool for the children and therefore, a celebration was held in its honour and for the people who helped make it possible. There, games were prepared and we played with the children. Later on in the day, a pool party was held where everyone could join in and have fun with the kids from the orphanage in the pool and swim. We took group photos and then enjoyed lunch together, which was cooked by staff from KIM.

Later in the afternoon, we returned to the church where we all gathered to leave for the orphanage. There were relief goods for typhoon Yolanda victims which were to be delivered in the church. We helped bring them to the transport vehicles which would deliver the goods to the victims. When we finished, myself and a few others packed rice for more relief good bags. For one packet, each family received an average-sized plastic bag filled with rice.



above: group photo of the kids and the people who came along to celebrate with them



above: lunch time with the children

A couple of weeks later, a classmate and myself visited the orphanage again. Close to the main building was a foundation for a building, this was going to be a future school for the kids living there. Cement was ready and a hole was dug for underground work, which was done by a few other people. The rocks and soil were put into bags and we carried these out to the lot where they were later brought out of the area for more space. After, the quadratic area in the hole was cemented and beside it, the soil had to be dug away in order for there to be an equal level of soil. I helped with the digging and packing of the rubble into bags, which were again carried away. Another area of the building which I contributed to was more underground work and support with metal rods. Myself and a few other teenagers carried them to the foundation area and they were then used by others. Below is a photograph of the construction site and it was definitely a first of mine to participate in physical labor such as this! It was a strenuous experience but definitely very fun being able to experience it with friends. Having the opportunity to help build learning space for children at the same time makes it even more amazing!



above: construction work at a KIM orphanage

February 2014:

This month, I joined two classmates once again to visit KIM. This time, I tried to engage in the activities with the children a bit more. We headed off for the orphanage and before the kids ate lunch, we spent time with them in one of the huts in the area. There, we sat down , spoke with each other and played with the dogs of the compound.



above: one of the children of KIM (right) and myself (left)

Once in a while, the volunteers who go to KIM receive a certain allowance from the Union Church of Manila for the children. With this money, cake and ice cream is bought around every other month to celebrate the birthdays of the children in KIM. This February was one of those months. After the kids finished eating their lunch, the volunteers and myself all helped to serve them slices of cake, ice cream and orange juice – as seen in the photo below.



After the children finished their meals, we had some games prepared for them. Other volunteers were in charge of explaining instructions to the kids and another volunteer and myself were the ones who distributed the prizes at the end of the games.



above: some of the KIM children taking part in the games, a classmate (background, white t-shirt) and myself (background, black t-shirt)

June 2014:

This month, I joined a classmate of mine to visit KIM once again. I was very excited to attend this visit as I haven't been at the KIM house since a few months already and wanted to participate once again. My goal was to engage myself in the activities with the children much more and become more comfortable around them. During this visit, we played a lot of games with the kids. Another volunteer, JC, and myself were in charge of preparing the games and then later on explaining instructions to the children.



above: JC (right) and myself (middle) explaining game instructions to some of the children

We divided the participating children in 3 groups with around 3-4 children in each. One group had at least one of the volunteers part of it to help with instructions and join in with the games. My group consisted of three girls and another volunteer, Raynee.



above: Raynee (left, red) photographing our group: myself (left, black) with group members

The aim of the game was to follow certain instructions to accomplish certain activities at areas in the KIM place and then photograph it as proof. One of those activities was to hang on the monkey bars as a group (previous page, bottom) and another was to slide down a slide in the area with all group members (below).



After we finished playing the game, the volunteers and myself served the children ice cream and cake since it was another month to celebrate the KIM childrens' birthdays.



above: myself (black t-shirt) serving the children ice cream

As the children were eating their cake and ice cream, we spent time together. The volunteers and myself were separated to several tables with the kids and spoke with them. When the children finished, we left the dining area to head for the outside. There, we spent more time with some of the children. We sat on the benches and played cards, played with the dogs, etc.



above: one of the children (red t-shirt) playing with one of the KIM dogs and myself (black t-shirt)



above: the group of volunteers for the June 2014 KIM meet-up

The activities I carried out with other volunteers in KIM are projects I hold very dear to me. The volunteers are now not only acquaintances of mine, but friends as well. I cherish these friendships I built with them and with the help of these projects, I managed to meet so many caring and kind people. I began with a rather distanced attitude towards children and such projects, however, already on my second visit, I felt much more comfortable and capable. I learned so many things with my visits to KIM and I believe this is the CAS activity which developed me the most as a person. I managed to learn my strengths and weaknesses with social interaction and as seen with the children, I've improved in several aspects of my weaknesses. I am very content with this and have come to realize the importance of being able to interact with all the people part of our society. With the help of KIM, I also learned to help others who are not as privileged as I am. I've developed my empathy for others and now always try to keep their feelings in mind. I believe that the projects I joined in KIM made me a better person and I owe many thanks to everyone for making me feel so welcome and part of the family. In the few months left I have in the Philippines, I will continue to try to attend more KIM projects and enjoy the rest of the time I have with the children and the other volunteers.

Service: beach clean-up

April 2014:

During this school break, I was in Boracay Island. My parents and I live on a mountain on the other side of the island which isn't as commercialised as the front beach. Not many tourists are in this area and therefore there is not much care regarding the littering situation. While walking on the beach with my dad and dog once, I realised that many plastic wrappers of different sizes are present – on the sand and in the water itself. I was invited to do beach clean-ups with others once, but I didn't have the time back then to help out. Noticing the litter on our beach, I decided to start initiate my own beach clean-up. In order to slightly improve this beach side's aesthetics and help the environment, I stopped to clean up a bit before returning back home. I found an empty rice sack on a pile of seaweed close by and used this to collect the garbage I found in the area.





two photos above: me collecting wrappers of different sorts in the Bulabog Beach area of Boracay



above: me collecting wrappers in a sack

After a while, I managed to fill up the whole sack. I could not find another bag to collect more garbage, so for this beach clean-up, it had to suffice. I then brought the rice sack to the nearest garbage collection area with the hopes of it being picked up and segregated in a proper way. When I return to Boracay once again, I am thinking about expanding this project and asking around for more people to join to create my very own beach clean-up group.



above: successful first clean-up – one sack filled with garbage

Service: Rainforest Park, Pasig Pool & Spaghetti Party

One day, most of my classmates and I went to the Rainforest Park close by the Floodway in Pasig Philippines. One of our teachers organized a pool party with some of the children in the area, where we met them at the pool. We had spaghetti ready and the kids were allowed to swim in the pool. When they were finished, some of us helped give the children the spaghetti and drinks prepared. Then, we all went to a grassy field to play some games that our class planned. All of us participated and prizes were given out to the children whenever they won a game. Another classmate and I were in charge of creating the playlists for the event, so we did that at home and were prepared with music for the party and games.

Our aim was to give the children a good time and I really think we were successful in pursuing that goal. The kids especially enjoyed the pool and they were thrilled to play some games and get their prizes (it was made sure that each child received at least one toy to make it fair). Even though the plan was successful, I believe we could have interacted with the children a bit more and had more time to talk and play games with them. Nevertheless, I'm pretty sure they enjoyed it and it was nice being able to be part of a project like this.



above: a classmate explaining the rules before the game starts



above: me in white (left) after passing the ball earlier

Service: Bantayan: local interviews regarding awareness & living

On our class' G4 trip to Bantayan island, we were divided into several groups with a few students speaking the native language. We thought up questions to ask the locals regarding their living situations and awareness relating to the marine environment in their area. Each group had around 5 people and since I could not fluently speak the native language, I decided to focus on creating the interview questions and writing down notes, instead. We carried out the local interviews on one whole day and when we returned to our hotel, our group created a powerpoint presentation with graphs and tables which displayed our results.

The aim of these findings was to present the living situations of the local people and how the government and non-government organizations provided them with aid during and after natural disasters such as typhoon Yolanda. Each group then presented their results in front of the others and the answers to the interviews regarding the people's awareness of their environment were also mentioned. In the end, all of us had to suggest ways in order to improve the situation in Bantayan and make the distribution of goods to the locals equal and fair. We had to come up with ideas on ways the government and NGOs could better support the population of the area as well.



above: me in the background (black) asking the locals a question

Service: Bantayan: coral planting

Another activity we did while we were in Bantayan was coral planting. When we arrived in our hotel, we participated in seminars with an emphasis on the marine environment and its sustenance. A few days later, our class was divided into 2 groups and we went out into the ocean with a boat, where we stopped at a damaged area (due to typhoon Yolanda). On our way there, each one of us tried cutting up corals into smaller pieces as demonstrated to us in the seminars. When we finished, we placed the pieces into a large plastic bowl which was then held above water by someone swimming. A rope was in the area and each student helped to attach the coral pieces to the rope.

The goal of this activity was to plant coral bits and allow them to thrive and grow in the following years to improve the marine environment in that area. It was my first time doing something like this and it was very fun in my opinion since I enjoy the ocean, especially with friends! With this project, I managed to understand the significance of the marine environment a lot more. I very much appreciate nature and thought this to be a really nice activity to carry out as a group, one which brought good results and enjoyment at the same time.



above: the whole class jumping in to begin coral planting on a rope underwater

And so the recording of my CAS activities has come to an end.

I'd like to thank my CAS supervisor, Mr. Christoph Grandt for being of much aid throughout my whole experience and to the whole KIM family, especially Ms. Amy Allen who took care of all of us throughout the activities. Another big thank you to the other volunteers for making me feel comfortable and at home! Much appreciation also goes out to my friends and classmates who made the experiences even more memorable!