

Your Donations Their Happiness

TWECS/VOSH BC Typhoon Haiyan Project



On November 8th 2013, the most powerful storm in the history of the Philippines, levelled communities in Samar- Leyte and killed over 9000 innocent people and children, 3 of them were my relatives. For days after the typhoon of November 8, news reports described the survivors' desperation to find loved ones; and

team could be of assistance. We were contacted by Remote Area Medical and VOSH International asking us to send an eye team into Tacloban. We had less than a month to organize an eye care project that would normally



drop everything and head into the disaster zone with little more than a sleeping bag. Team members were told to expect extreme camping for 17 days and still no one backed out. Our biggest challenge was preparing 15,000 pairs of eyeglasses into a workable library in five weeks. We managed to get everything organized including all the proper documentation to clear Philippines's customs, as well as arranging clinic sites in the devastated area. Our first impression was that we were in a war zone. There was destruction, garbage and rubble everywhere. Everything around us showed the immense force of Typhoon Haiyan.



their search for food, shelter and water. An eye mission at the time seemed irrelevant. But as the situation improved in the week that followed we knew an Optometric Critical Care

take a year to prepare. Not surprisingly the response from Optometrists was amazing! Within 36 hours, we had 50 replies from around the world. We put together an international team of ODs from Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Nepal and the Philippines. Everyone was prepared to





On some days our clinic locations had other medical groups alongside us such as the Norwegian Red Cross, The Guam Medical Society, Rosa Mystica Medical Group and Doctors without Borders (MSF). Without exception during our clinics, each medical group saw less than 30 patients a day while TWECS eye doctors saw up to 700 a day. It was this obvious discrepancy in the line up of patients outside the TWECS

optometry clinic that made us realize a person's vision is critical in rebuilding lives after a disaster. We heard countless stories of office workers and teachers sharing one



pair of reading glasses amongst

of Basey. He traveled there the day before, waited in the line at 3 am and was the first person seen by our doctors. He left our clinic overjoyed with two pairs of glasses. We met a young myopic girl who had not removed her contact lenses since the Typhoon eight weeks before, because she had lost her glasses during the storm and had no contact lens solution. We met people who came with broken eyeglasses held together by elastic bands, by string, and



by wire. Everyone who waited in the queue told us their stories. How their glasses were "washed out" in the black

30 degree heat. Our Team persevered without complaint until the last patient



was seen; but there are still tens of thousands who need our help. Thank you again for your generosity and kindness. Our team personally gave out your relief donations to over 500 homeless families still living in tents. You brought smiles and a little hope to eight thousand beautiful and gracious people whose lives were destroyed by the typhoon. Please join us on a return visit to Tacloban in 2015. For more stories of our mission please visit the blog on our website at www.twecs.ca.

Dr. Marina Roma-March
President, Third World Eye Care Society
VOSH BC



themselves in an office or a school. We met an extremely myopic man who followed our team to 3 different towns hoping to get into the clinic. He was finally seen on our last day in the town



water surge during the height of the storm. The TWECS team worked 13 straight days of clinic in Tacloban, Tanauan and Basey. We saw a record **8106** patients in stifling humidity and

