

**22 August 2014**

**Report on a visit to Giporlos, areas devastated by Typhoon Haiyan / Yolanda**



Today, we visited a site which is part of the town of Giporlos, in Eastern Samar. The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace has partnered with the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development of Canada, and with Catholic Relief Services (of the United States) to construct 80 permanent dwellings on high ground, protected from future flooding. These dwellings are among more than 3,200 that will be constructed with the support of Development and Peace in the areas affected by the typhoon. The

land for the new community was donated by the young mayor of Giporlos.

When we arrived, we were greeted with music and dancing. There were songs and dances by members of the community (including an impromptu performance by a group of young children). Most impressive was seeing those who were receiving new homes come forward to receive their signed certificates of ownership. Finally, there was a huge feast with the whole community. We used slices of banana stems as plates and ate a variety of exotic foods, most of which I had never seen before.



The new homes being constructed are tiny by our standards, but a dramatic improvement for many of the residents. Their construction is being supervised by an on-site engineer, and many of the locals are involved in the labour as well. Most importantly, Development and Peace is working with the community to ensure the distribution of new homes is equitable, and that the new community will be sustainable, resilient, unified, and able to provide social and economic improvement for its members. Much of this involves educating the people,

which can include teaching alternate forms of livelihood, improved (or new) agricultural practices, teaching citizens their rights with respect to the various levels of government (which can often be very slow to act), and helping the community organize itself so it can make decisions for the good of all its members. In some cases, this also involves advocacy (for example, when a community lacks proper infrastructure or is in need of some other assistance).

In all this, Development and Peace works not only with, but through, its partner Caritas Filipinas, which is administered by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines. In Giporlos, this involves the local Diocese of Borongan and the local parish priest, who was also present at our celebration today.

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