

Ron & Lauris in the Philippines

April 2014

Dear friends,

Greetings from Leyte Island in the Philippines. It's spring back home in Canada - a time of new beginnings and looking forward to better things after the winter weather.

While it is not spring in the Philippines, it is still a time of looking forward toward new beginnings for many of the survivors of Super Typhoon Haiyan / Yolanda.

May 8th is the six-month anniversary of that life-changing event. Many positive things have been accomplished over the past six months, but much remains to be done. For example, even today, many people in our city of Tacloban remain without electrical power. Early Recovery is the name put to the current stage; whereas full 'recovery' will take many years.

One month from now, the rainy season will begin. There is a sense of urgency to accomplish as much as humanly possible before the rains, and at the same time there is a sense of wanting to move carefully so that the outcomes will support long-term sustainability. It is a delicate balancing act.

Last week Ron worked with a team of colleagues in the village (barangay) of Hagna where we hope to construct the first of many concrete-framed homes. Lauris has been trying for weeks to extract some information from another NGO so we can identify the partially-damaged houses that World Renew will repair in other communities. These are steps in the right direction - a cause for celebration!

Here is another great highlight. The World Renew Cash-for-Work community gardens are yielding a harvest. The Kapitanas (Council Heads) of two communities insisted on sending some sample veggies to the World Renew staff in the Tacloban office. They sent okra, hantak (the longest beans we have ever seen!), karubasa (pumpkin) and ampauya (dinosaur ampauya...in this case due to the bumpy surface).

Harvests from Barangay Bulod were sold in the



municipal market and the income has been set aside for future seeds. In fact, this barangay is upheld as a model for the rest of the municipality for how to do a community garden well. Other barangays have shared the harvest in their communities. Sadly the situation is not so bright everywhere. The unseasonable heavy rains flooded some gardens in low-lying areas.

Personally, we are both turning the page on another year and celebrating our birthdays. Another year older and blessed to be able to serve with World Renew! What a privilege! Thank you World Renew for the trust you have given us. We do our best to live out that trust every day as we serve the Yolanda survivors.

Now for a little local colour! We saw a word written on the back of a van recently - 'HAYAHAY' it means relax. A suitable word for a truck that makes many stops! We will try to be efficient yet relaxed!

We will not be as relaxed as Dwayne Nienhuis, however. He is also a fellow International Relief Manager who has just headed back to the USA to rejoin his family. He has been based in Guiuan, a 4-hour drive from Tacloban where we live. He has been laying the groundwork over the past 10 weeks for the next year of longer-term disaster response

activities planned for the Guiuan area. We had a staff lunch for him and a time of debriefing. Then, we took him out for dinner to Giuseppe's Italian Restaurant - uptown sophistication for special occasions. We wish him a happy reunion with his family.

Communities here are getting excited about the shelter solutions that World Renew is working toward - we're planning to construct small typhoon/earthquake resistant, sustainable homes. The houses can be easily expanded over time. For some houses partially damaged by Yolanda, we plan to do repairs. It is clear however that the "line" between a totally-damaged home and a partially-damaged home is not always clear!

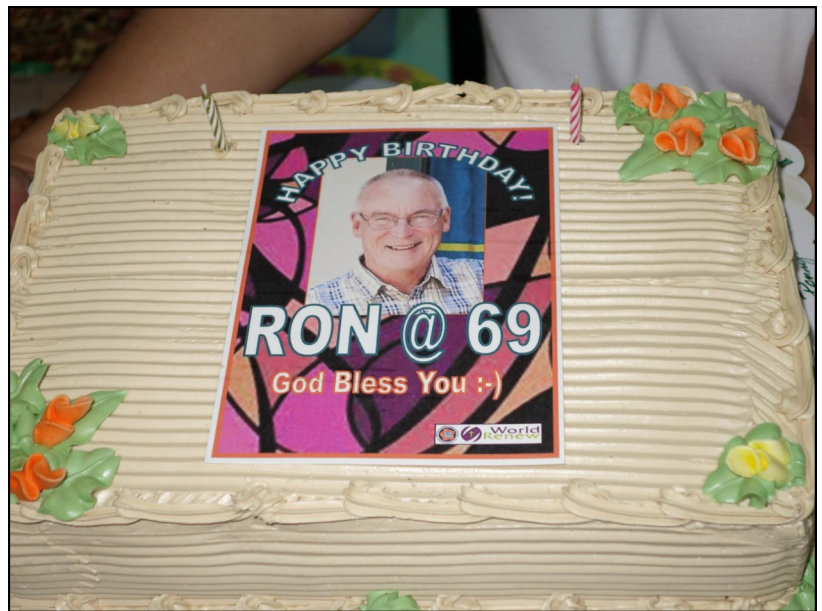
Nonetheless, new beginnings are definitely in the works and our presence in the communities helps generate hope. Generating hope is a good thing as long as we do not raise unrealistic expectations!

We continue to explore the area of livelihoods and psychosocial care. The plans are percolating. Little by little, step-by-step, moving forward, taking ground!

Herein lies the hope - better things are yet to come!

Thank you for the emails and messages, for the prayers and good wishes.

- Ron & Lauris Fuller



A birthday celebration to remember!

Prayer Requests:

- Staffing - that the remaining positions will be filled with effective people
- Wisdom - in decision making with special favour for Mona Saroinsong as she steers the team as the Program Manager
- Encouragement - for the staff as they pull together and strengthen each other.
- Hope - for so many who are still in temporary / makeshift shelter
- Visitors - as donors visit and we tour them around, pray that the time will be of benefit to them and that 'hope' shines through

Praises:

- Rest - over Easter weekend with fellow IRMs John and Hilda Van Gyssel
- Healing - for Hilda who is recovering from dengue fever
- Sunshine - we are enjoying a break from the rains!
- Good health and safety
- The remarkable ability of the people to focus on the positive
- The friendliness of Filipinos, which makes something as simple as walking down the street special. "Good Morning Sir", "Good Afternoon Ma'am" "Hello Ma'am Sir. Can I help you?"
- The spiritual growth of the staff. They love to sing "Standing on the Promises"



Some of the bounty shared with us from the Bulod community garden.