



Meet our unsung heroes



Nerve centre: The Philippine Red Cross/IFRC's warehouse in Tacloban is the hub of the recovery operation for Typhoon Haiyan in Leyte

Spare a thought for the IFRC Philippines' Logistics Team.

From relief goods to housing material, from medical supplies to transporting goods, from pens to IT equipment, the IFRC's Logistics team is the unsung heroes of any operation.

It provides support and gets things done behind the scenes. Working as a tight unit, team members help Red Cross deliver what is needed even in the remotest places.

Welcome to the first edition of The Delegate, your quarterly insight into Red Cross recovery efforts in the Philippines

The logistics team handles the supply chain for IFRC-supported operations, starting with procurement through to reception and delivery of goods and materials – all of which are constantly monitored for quality

and timeliness of delivery.

To give you an idea of volume, between January 2014 and January 2015 the logistics team handled 81,544 cubic metres of supplies. These all have to meet international and operational standards and are processed following strict guidelines.

The biggest challenge for IFRC logistics coordinator Sharma and his team is maintaining the supply chain. This entails coordination with the program managers and

other support services such as finance – essential if purchases and deliveries are to meet their tight timelines.

After Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, the logistics team moved more than 10,800 cubic metres of relief goods to more than 115,000 families, coordinating with the Global Logistics Service APZ Logistics Units and 27 Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies. During the recovery phase, more than 198,000 tonnes of material will be used by the IFRC to build its target of 9,000 new houses.

With the IFRC also supporting shelter repair, rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities, classrooms and health facilities in Haiyan-affected areas, ensuring supply of goods and materials takes a lot of hard work, but the logistics team relishes a challenge!



Left:
Steel pipes
are among
the essential
supplies for
construction
projects

Below:
Cement bags
being loaded
for
distribution
to shelter
beneficiaries

Photos by
Rommel
Cabrera



View from inside the warehouse

If you've ever wondered what it's like to work in a warehouse, ask Aian Rey "Normie" Dispoho. He's the IFRC's "backroom boy" in the Tacloban warehouse just outside town.

The warehouse assistant oversees the loading of trucks, counts the goods, dispatches the CGI sheets, organises what gets put where, makes sure the mess is minimised and generally keeps an eye on things behind the battered green warehouse doors.

"When we're busy it's hard work," he says. "That's why it's important to have a plan because there is always so much going on as the goods are received and dispatched.

"I'm working with people who know what they're doing – I tell them how much to load and they do it, then I check.

"It's important to check all the time – not just the goods, but the paperwork like the waybills and the delivery notes.

"We have delivered 80,000 sheets of CGI all over Leyte. Some places are difficult to access, especially when it rains. Some of the roads are very narrow and we need to carefully figure out how we're going to deliver the goods.

"We only have one day to finish the deliveries, even in bad weather and poor conditions,



Heavy responsibilities: Warehouse supervisor Aian Rey

Photo: Rommel Cabrera

**"We're logisticians,
not magicians"**
- Nand Lal Sharma,
IFRC's
logistics co-ordinator

because the beneficiaries have arrived and we can't keep them

waiting too long. So that means working late into the night.

"Because we're short of volunteers we ask the beneficiaries to help us with unloading. I love the work even though it's hard. I mean, I get to meet people from different places and lots of different countries!"

Introducing Kari Isomaa, Head of the IFRC's Philippine Delegation



Kari Isomaa with PRC Secretary-General Gwen Pang and children from an evacuation centre in Dolores, Samar after Typhoon Hagupit struck the region in December 2014

Kari Isomaa has a degree in international business administration and management and started his professional career as a business manager in the corporate world.

He is fluent in several languages including his native Finnish and Swedish.

He started his career with IFRC in 2012 as resource mobilisation and partnership delegate in Bangladesh.

His previous role was Head of the IFRC's Pyongyang Delegation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

His hobbies are sports, his summer houses in Sweden and Dubai, and traveling to exotic places, but also a big passion for his work ... he likes to tweet about "everything and nothing".

I arrived in Manila in mid-November and almost immediately we had a typhoon on our hands – Hagupit. I was highly impressed with how everyone here was so quick off the mark, well prepared and professional and how quickly the Red Cross movement was able to start responding and getting help to the beneficiaries.

Apart from the daily coordination meetings with the Chairman, the Secretary-General and the Philippine Red Cross team, ICRC and the partner National Societies, we had regular SMS and email updates from the PRC Operations Centre at National Headquarters to inform me and my team about the status of the storm and the operational response. Then of course there were "sitreps" from my IFRC staff as well as other sources of information. It was a lot to take in!

The Hagupit operation was a good learning curve on how we at Red

Cross deal with disasters and coordinate the response in the best way possible. And it must be remembered that given all the forecasts we were expecting Hagupit to be another super typhoon. Even though it didn't turn out to be as bad as we thought, it was still bigger than anything I've ever faced. All I can say is what a relief that its impact was much less than predicted.

It was really interesting to follow up Hagupit in person with the PRC Chairman and Secretary-General. We visited places like Dolores in Eastern Samar where we could see for ourselves the reality of the damage that results from such a typhoon, such as the tens of thousands of beneficiaries who were without homes.

What impressed me was how fast Philippine Red Cross acted. As soon as we arrived the Chairman received reports from his people on the ground and ordered relief goods and tents on the spot, and

we had a Canadian Red Cross delegate with us who helped set up a Basic Health Care Unit that same day so affected people could have their medical needs attended to while the hospital was being repaired. It was so

“What impressed me was how fast Philippine Red Cross acted”

rewarding to see how grateful people were for the help.

This experience has reinforced my belief that we always have to think about how to build resilience. When communities are more resilient they are less affected by disaster.

So we need to work on a common goal of sharing our knowledge and experience with the PRC so it can increase its capacity across all the

recovery sectors.

I am really proud to be part of the Red Cross movement despite being very new to the role. It motivates me to do a good job. It's also really important for me to visit the field as much as possible, to follow up issues and to have a dialogue with the beneficiaries. It's easier to advocate for the Red Cross movement, take decisions and influence outcomes when I see the reality with my own eyes.

As for this year, it's hardly started yet but I think we will be back to business as usual.

Last year we had separate Haiyan and non-Haiyan operations, but my plan is to merge them so we can optimise our delegates' experience and knowledge and also find synergies with national society colleagues.

I would like to see everyone in my team grow in their respective areas and involve others in headquarters and in the field.



PRC chairman Richard Gordon orders tents for evacuees who lost their homes and belongings to Typhoon Hagupit

Tourism graduate is inspired to help

Vanela Torres, IFRC's chapter Livelihood Project Assistant in Aklan, writes about her daily routine – and it's not for the faint hearted!

My name is Vanela Grace Rentillo Torres. At 21 years of age I'm the youngest technical project assistant in the Livelihood Cash Transfer Program for the Philippine Red Cross Haiyan Operation, Aklan, Panay.

I've never been to other places like the others (not yet anyway) but I am grateful that I've had the chance to explore my own province of Aklan.

A typical day would be like this: wake up 5:30 am, reflect, take a shower, walk 3 kilometers from home to my 'second home' (Aklan Chapter), check and send emails, instruct volunteers, do field work, interact with beneficiaries and the Barangay Recovery Committee [the community liaison group], meet barangay officials, entertain questions, laugh, reflect, empower, be grateful, go back to the chapter, plan activities for the next few days with the volunteers, log out and go home.

I'm in charge of forming the BRCs and helping them to formulate [assessment] criteria, as well as assisting them on selecting possible beneficiaries for livelihood support. I also lead community validation [to select and confirm beneficiaries] and generate livelihood proposals.

On top of that I arrange schedules and venues for cash pay-outs and



At work: Vanela's typical day starts at 5.30am

contact the pay-out merchants [used by PRC and partners] for Partner National Societies working with the PRC chapter and monitor all the beneficiaries.

Many people underestimate this job, but it's not as easy as they

Vanela's daily schedule is not for the faint hearted

think it is. You have to be patient and tough to face pressure and stress, not just from the beneficiaries but also from the people around you. As a tourism graduate, many have told me that this field of work is far from what I have studied. But I just give them a smile. I have never regretted being a volunteer.

It's an odd job and I love it. No doubt that I've fallen in love with

what we term *The Red Cross FEELS* (the passion of helping and empowering others through simple activities of PRC). Mistakes happen, often, but it is a learning process to equip us to perform better.

One beneficiary once told me: "The hardest things in life are those things that are the most satisfying to be done with."

The best part of this task is knowing there are people who value and continuously develop and improve their quality of life through our livelihood programs.

And it feels great that you have changed and inspired someone else's life.

I really like the idea of sharing my experiences and what Red Cross people do with the world. And make the world a better place to live in.



Manolito at work supervising and planning at the shelter site in Daanbantayan, Cebu

There's been a change in attitude

Logistician Manolito Aguelo is the IFRC's warehouse and logistics Cebu and Panay and disaster response volunteer at the Cebu chapter. The former construction contractor used to have his own business before joining the logistics team. He is also an expert on marine conservation and is a really good person to consult if you want to know the best spots for diving.

Although I'm usually based in Cebu City, at the moment I'm travelling through Antique with the IFRC logistics team.

In Antique so far, IFRC has built 200 houses and has another 200 to complete by the end of the year. Part of the team's role is to check out work that has been completed and do some troubleshooting.

In my volunteer disaster response role, I'm seeing a change in community attitudes towards preparedness and a willingness to adapt.

Disaster response is very new to the communities in Cebu, but there is a change in attitude since we started teaching disaster risk reduction.

It has made a big difference in how we respond to road accidents. Before Yolanda when there was an accident on the road it would be the Cebu chapter who responded, which meant a four hour trip there and back.

Because of Yolanda (Haiyan) there are finally more ambulances and a lot of barangays have asked for disaster risk reduction training, whereas before we used to have to go into the communities and explain it and convince the community that it was important.

Now they come to us and *ask* for training!

I have to say, I've worn a lot of uniforms in my time but I'm most proud of the Red Cross one.

Urgent need to up the ante in advocacy with communities

Recently, communications delegate Kate Marshall attended the Asia Pacific regional Disaster Risk Reduction workshop in Bangkok hosted by the Federation, where she interviewed the Philippine Red Cross head of Disaster Management, Eric Salve, about next steps for DRR advocacy.

Salve said the Bangkok workshop gave all participants a significant opportunity to learn about the urgent need to up the ante in the movement's advocacy efforts with communities.

'In the Philippines, advocacy is key to strengthening, promoting and maintaining relationships between Philippine Red Cross and the communities we work in, but

the issue for us is how to sustain this for the long term,' he said.

Salve said super Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013 had changed community attitudes to disasters in a very profound way.

"Since then, people are expecting more action from disaster

"Haiyan prompted a rethink about future responses"

management responders in government, aid agencies and the Philippine Red Cross," he said.

Salve says Typhoon Haiyan was a tough lesson for emergency responders.

Philippine Red Cross is well used to operating in multiple locations

and responding to natural disasters, but coming as it did straight after a major earthquake (Bohol), Haiyan tested the organisation's capacity to the limit and prompted a rethink about future responses.

Salve said Haiyan was a wake-up call for the Philippine Red Cross to redouble its community volunteer recruitment efforts. In many of the worst hit areas staff and regular volunteers were either affected themselves or cut off and unable to help.

Another factor that has made a difference post-Haiyan is stronger leadership at the provincial and municipal level. Some coastal provinces that always cop a beating in every disaster have managed to contain injury and



Eric Salve leads a session at the IFRC's Bangkok DRR workshop

loss of life through preparation and evacuation.

The resilience of Filipinos was again tested by Typhoon Hagupit, the biggest storm to hit the Philippines since Haiyan. As soon as it was spotted forming and heading towards roughly the same regions hit by Haiyan, the government and its agencies swung into action.

Well over one million people were pre-emptively evacuated – said by newspaper reports to be the largest peacetime evacuation since the Second World War.

Even though Hagupit destroyed houses and infrastructure, the human cost was far less. Officially, 18 people died compared with Haiyan's death toll of 6,300.

Salve says reports received from Hagupit and the following tropical

storm Seniang (both in December) were that many people acted on their own initiative and they also applied Red Cross training to safeguard their homes and families. He says thanks to the tireless work of Philippine Red Cross community volunteers, attitudes are gradually shifting.

"It's no longer enough for individuals to secure their property and take care of their families.

"Impending disaster needs concerted community level preparation and action."

"People are more willing to give up their time to become a community volunteer as they see that others start respecting them and listening to them," says Salve.

"It's no longer enough for individuals to secure their property and take care of their families. Impending disaster needs concerted community level preparation and action that will

ensure that garbage is removed, that communal property like pipes and buildings are maintained.

"But at the community level, DRR is still fragile.

"A lot depends on the calibre of leadership and the willingness of people to participate in exercises like community evacuation drills,

clean ups and initiatives aimed at improving health.

"Haiyan taught

us a lot, such as more effective preparation," Salve says, "but Hagupit reminded us that we still need to fast track and prioritise recruitment of community volunteers.

"We need to remember that during a typhoon everyone is vulnerable and our messages need to get through to the whole community."

Right: Secretary-General Gwen Pang documents the damage from Hagupit



Left: Cleaning up after Hagupit, which tested Filipinos' resilience

First aiders keep the fun in festivals

It's normal for life to be hectic at Philippine Red Cross, but did you know that some chapters provide first aid and food for significant cultural festivals and events?

Just last week the PRC Iloilo chapter and the city health office teamed up to provide first aid and ambulance services over four days of the world famous Kasadyahan and Dinagyang Festivals, which attracts thousands of bystanders as well as performers.

Although events happen throughout January, the hugely colourful celebrations (meaning frolic or playing around in the local language) ramp up with the Fluvial Parade at the start of the third week. For this the Philippine Red Cross and City health office deployed 150 volunteers and staff at 15 first aid stations along the parade route. Their purpose was to provide basic health services, while an ambulance crew with back up made sure that more serious health needs could be attended to.

The nerve centre of the festival's operations was the PRC's Iloilo chapter headed by administrator Gilbert Valderama.

The health teams were readied for events such as the opening salvo, Miss Dinagyang, Lucas in the Sky, Tambor Trumpa Martsa Muskia (drum and bugle corps), Fluvial Procession, Food Festival and awards.

"From a response perspective the number of people treated (77) was this lower this year. This was helped by cooler conditions compared with previous years," Guevarra said.

"Our media messages told people to hydrate before



PRC volunteers at keep a watchful eye on Dinagyang Festival goers at Iloilo, Panay

coming out, wear comfortable shoes and don't forget your maintenance meds!

"Last year a slew of people collapsed because they didn't eat before going out - they wanted to get to the staging area early so they skipped the most important meal of the day."

This year, the cooler weather was a bonus for both the Dingagyang crowds and performers.

"Thankfully we had no big fires before or after the festival this year - fire trucks were pre-positioned to avoid having to cross the city. It was a different story two years ago an entire neighbourhood was deserted because everyone had departed for the festival.

"We had to smash through houses to get to the fire. It was a challenge because we were so exhausted already from the evening, and we had to set up a mobile kitchen and serve food for people coming home."