



TAO-PILIPINAS, INC.

YP
YOUNG PROFESSIONALS
eNEWSLETTER
NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2017



The almost finished community-based resource center of Masagana became the venue for the annual gift-giving activity. (Photo by: Lorena Hernandez)

MASAGANA CBRC CONSTRUCTION COMMENCES

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE transitional Community-Based Resource Center (CBRC) of the Masagana of Angat Homeowners Association commenced on the second Sunday of July this year (July 9, 2017). The transitional CBRC was designed by architecture students and Young Professionals (YP) interns Herculhes Ebol and Christian Erol Enriquez from the University of Santo Tomas (UST). The design utilized materials from the dismantled Multi-Purpose Hall and Livelihood Center of the community of SAMASAIIP from Sitio Pulo, Barangay Tanza, Navotas. The community facilities, intended to be demountable, were no longer used by SAMASAIIP since the residents had been relocated and the islet where they previously lived in is currently uninhabited. The recovered materials include micro-concrete rooftiles (MCR), wood, wire mesh, and woodwool cement-bonded boards (Omniboard).

The original dimension of the CBRC was 12m x 4m but due to budget constraints, the construction was divided into two phases. The current construction phase, the first phase, has the dimensions 7.5m x 4m. The second phase will only begin as soon as additional budget is available; nevertheless, it was ensured that the CBRC can already be used upon completion of the first phase. Alternative building materials were incorporated into its design in order to maximize the available materials on-site. Earthbags were used on selected walls of the CBRC while wire mesh was used on the remaining parts of the wall to provide ample ventilation to the structure. Wood, concrete, sawali, Omniboard, and MCR were also used in construction.

As for their counterpart, the main task of Masagana was to build the CBRC structure through their “bayanihan” efforts. All members who are living either on-site or

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Typhoon Haiyan 4th Anniversary Commemoration Exhibit

LAST NOVEMBER, THE COUNTRY COMMEMORATED the 4th anniversary of Typhoon Haiyan. Typhoon Haiyan is considered to be the deadliest typhoon to hit the Philippines in modern times with a recorded 6,300 fatalities according to National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC). It made its first landfall on November 7, 2013 in Guiuan, Eastern Samar with wind speed reaching more than 300kph. The strong winds and rain brought widespread destruction throughout the region resulting to various humanitarian relief and rehabilitation projects undertaken by both international and local relief agencies.

TAO-Pilipinas has been involved in the rehabilitation and redevelopment of Guiuan, Eastern Samar particularly in the islands of Manicani and Homonhon under the multi-stakeholder project called Project Pagbangon. Project Pagbangon is spearheaded by Philippine Misereor Partnership Inc. (PMPI) and began in 2014. This year, as the project nears its ending, an exhibit was organized by PMPI as part of the anniversary commemoration. The exhibit was held in the lower ground floor area of Ali Mall in Araneta Center, Quezon City and ran from November 8-9, 2017.

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The community members of Masagana work together to build their resource center which made use of alternative building materials such as earthbags.

off-site were expected to be a part of the “bayanihan”. They agreed to construct the CBRC regularly every Sunday until it is finished. The attendance of the members was monitored and those who were unable to participate were asked to contribute an amount that will be used for the cooked meal and snacks of those who were present during building. To help them construct, aside from the working drawings, the YP interns also created a construction guidelines booklet

which was written in Filipino and explained in layman’s terms to help members better understand the proper procedure of building the CBRC. TAO-Pilipinas staff Engr. Lorena Hernandez and Theresse Julia regularly monitored the construction progress with the help of YP intern John Frederick Mejia and YP volunteer Arch. Marie Angelli Centeno who donated more than 400 sacks out of the 520 sacks needed for the earthbags.



The exterior view of the community-based resource center of Masagana of Angat Homeowners Association in Bulacan.

Due to the “bayanihan” nature of the construction, progress was slow and dependent on the number of members present. The presence of skilled workers helped increase productivity but unfortunately, their attendance was unpredictable and irregular. To augment the limited project budget, additional materials were bought using donation of individuals and community savings. The members were

also asked to provide at least 1 sack of cement each household for the finishing works since the exposed sacks were starting to disintegrate. After more than 20 weeks, the CBRC is almost finished and was already used during the annual Christmas gift-giving activity of Masagana. (MLPH)

The Long Awaited Blessing

SEVEN YEARS SINCE THEY HAVE ACQUIRED THEIR OWN land for resettlement, Masagana of Angat Homeowners Association finally held a blessing for the initial 19 houses built on the site. It was an emotional day for the homeowners who went through a lot of struggle before having their own house. The blessing was led by Rev. Fr. Orville Cajigal, a Rogationist priest and part of St. Hannibal Empowerment Center (SHEC), and was participated by community members of Masagana and some TAO staff.

Of the 19 houses that were blessed, eight are already permanent shelters being occupied by their homeowners, four are still being constructed, and seven houses are still temporary shelters that were just transferred from their staging area. The blessing ceremony also included the blessing of the community-based resource center. The 1st phase of the transitional facility is almost complete and was already used by the community for its Christmas gift-giving activity.

House construction will still continue next year but this is all dependent on the budget of the community organization and its members. All of the members have already transferred to their assigned lots from the staging area that they used to occupy when they first resettled at the site. The community still needs funds and support for the site development of the area and construction of other community facilities. (AMPS)



Rev. Fr. Orville Cajigal starts the blessing ceremony by reading the gospel (top photo) then proceeds to going around the site blessing houses (bottom photo).

Typhoon Haiyan... *(continued from page 1)*

The Project Pagbangan exhibit showcased the different project outputs of the various partners who worked in the project. Photos and three-dimensional models were mounted by project partners which includes Sentro para sa Ikauunlad ng Katutubong Agham at Teknolohiya (SIKAT) for coastal resource management, Medical Action Group (MAG) and Integrative Medicine for Alternative Healthcare Systems (INAM) for community health, Sibol ng Agham at Teknolohiya (SIBAT) for renewable energy and water system in island barangays, and Peace and Conflict Journalism Network for communications. For shelter and evacuation, TAO-Pilipinas showed photos documenting the various stages of the project, from the participatory design workshops to the turn-over of the finished shelter units and community evacuation centers. They also mounted a 3d model at 1:5,000

meter scale and 1:10,000 meter scale respectively for Manicani and Homonhon Islands showing the location of the project outputs of each project partner.

The two-day exhibit was accompanied by lecture sessions in the afternoon and a jamming session by guest artists in the evening. For the first day of the exhibit, Fr. Dexter Toledo, OFM gave the opening lecture about Laudato Si, Pope Francis' encyclical about the environment. He discussed the content of Laudato Si and its importance given the current impact of climate change in our country. He was then followed by Arch. Angelus Maria Sales from TAO-Pilipinas. Arch. Sales talked about disaster preparedness focusing on the basic concepts of disaster risk reduction and management, importance of hazards map, and seismic retrofitting. She also discussed about the "Big

One" and its estimated effect on Metro Manila. The last presentation for the first day of the lecture session was from Bryan Teodosio of Community Organizers Multiversity (COM). He talked about community-based disaster risk reduction and management (CBDRRM) and their experience with Damayan sa Floodway and Lupang Arenda communities in Taytay, Rizal. He also introduced Damayan and Lupang Arenda leaders who talked about the respective CBDRRM projects done by their community.

After the lecture session on the first day, guest performers provided entertainment for the crowd including music artists Sensing Neptune, the resident performing group of League of Authors of Public Interest Songs (LAPIS), and Musika Publiko. Sensing Neptune performed a cover of "Sandugo" which was originally sang by Tres Marias and Chikoy Pura and composed by Gary Granada.

The second day of the lecture session featured SIKAT Executive Director, Chito Dugan for the opening lecture. He talked about DRRM in the context of coastal resource management and discussed the initiatives undertaken by SIKAT in Manicani and Homonhon Islands such as

building artificial reef, as well as the effects of those initiatives in the community. He was followed by Edeliza Hernandez, Executive Director of MAG, who talked about health rights as a human right. She also briefly discussed the Hyogo Framework and its relevance to health rights in the context of a disaster. After MAG's presentation, Lucia Ventic of INAM began her lecture with some physical exercises to engage the audience. She then proceeded to discuss about Chinese medicine principles and gave a brief background on ear acupuncture. The last presentation came from Shen Maglinte of SIBAT where he discussed the value of renewable energy and its connection to environmental protection.

The guest artists that performed for the second day were the group Tunog Malay-a and rapper Alexis John "Alexiz" Baniqued. They performed their original music compositions throughout the day to attract people to the exhibit and listen to the lectures. The 2-day event ended with a closing remark from PMPI National Coordinator, Yolanda Esguerra, who thanked all the guests and audience in Ali Mall for gracing the exhibit. (AMPS)



Fr. Dexter Toledo starts the lecture session during the first day of the exhibit with a brief presentation about Laudato Si.



Arch. Angelus Maria Sales gives a lecture about disaster preparedness during the first day of the exhibit.



The 3d scaled models of the islands of Homonhon (left) and Manicani (right) is the centerpiece of the exhibit.

Handrail design developed for Barangay Coloong walkway



*The two schemes made by TAO-Pilipinas for Brgy. Coloong: base mounted handrail design (top photo) and side mounted handrail design (middle photo).
Bottom photo: This photo of the concrete walkway was taken during the site visit of the TAO technical staff.*

AS PART OF THE FINANCIAL Enablers Project, TAO-Pilipinas provided technical assistance in the form of a handrail design to community members of Del Rosario Compound Neighborhood Association, Inc. (DRCNAI) in Barangay Coloong, Valenzuela City. The DRCNAI community is mainly accessible through a narrow concrete walkway connected to the main road. It is surrounded by fish ponds and its access route is often submerged in water. Technical

staff of TAO visited the area on September 29, 2017 to check the site conditions and consult with the community leaders on their preferred handrail design. Present in the meeting were community leaders of DRCNAI led by their president, Mr. Rommel Laxamana, TAO technical staff, Arch. Verna Lucia Sarraga, Arch. Angelus Maria Sales, and architect-in-training Therese Julia as well as TAO community development officer, Jazel

Virtusio. Accompanying TAO staff were Teresa Prondosa and Engr. Juan Paolo Genzola of Foundation for the Development of the Urban Poor (FDUP), the community organizer of DCRNAI.

The design problem was to provide a sturdy handrail on one side of the concrete walkway, approximately 100 meters long and one meter wide, with a budget of Php70,000.00 only. This narrow concrete walkway is the main entry and exit point of the DRCNAI community members. It was recently elevated with the addition of culverts provided by their barangay. The walkway is prone to accidents especially at night when visibility is low and lights only come from surrounding houses.

Two handrail design schemes were presented to the community members on October 27, 2017. The two schemes, made by Therese Julia and Engr. Lorena Hernandez, differ in how they are mounted. The first scheme is base mounted wherein the post is to be bolted on the concrete walkway using base plates and bolts. Concrete will then be poured on the base plate to further secure the handpost. This scheme costs around Php59,000.00 based on cost estimates. The second scheme is side mounted wherein flat bars and bolts are used to clamp the handpost on the sides of the concrete walkway. A portion of the handpost is also bended and inserted inside the culvert and then poured with concrete to further secure the handpost. The second scheme costs around Php65,000.00. Both design schemes will use galvanized iron pipes and reinforcing bars for handrails, and parts of the handrail will be welded.

After the presentation made by Ms. Julia, the community members voted to choose the second scheme mainly because the side mounted handrail will not take up space on the already narrow walkway as opposed to the first scheme which will reduce the width of the walkway by 0.80 meters. They also wanted to incorporate some changes into the second scheme. A few of the changes they mentioned were to insert the bended portion of the handpost in between the culverts instead of inside the culverts and to make the intervals of the handpost where the street lamp will be placed nine meters instead of five meters.

A community validation of the final handrail design was done on October 30, 2017 by Ms. Julia together with Arch. Sales and facilitated by Engr. Genzola. In the community validation, the revisions to the second scheme were incorporated increasing the cost to around Php70,000.00. Work schedule for the community project was also laid out and agreed upon by the community members. The community estimated the project to be completed by the end of December 2017.

To date, the final working drawings have already been submitted to FDUP and PHILSSA. FDUP has now received the funds to be used for handrail construction. A construction manual for the fabrication and installation of the handrail has also been written by Ms. Julia and submitted to FDUP. The manual will serve as guide for the DRCNAI community who will provide the labor to construct the handrail. (AMPS)

PCUP Forum on Climate-Resilient Housing for the Urban Poor



PCUP Chairman, Atty. Terry Ridon, gives the welcome remark for the forum.

LAST NOVEMBER 20, THE Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP) organized a forum entitled "Climate-Resilient Housing for the Urban Poor: Actions and Prospects". The objective of the forum is to explore alternative approaches and sustainable technologies in house construction, utility provision, and community management. It also aims to begin a conversation among housing stakeholders including shelter agencies on how to mainstream these alternative approaches into their policies and programs.

Of the invited national government agencies, only the Department of Interior and Local Government

(DILG) and National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) sent representatives. Private corporations and non-profit organizations were also invited to present their innovative approaches. Among those invited to present were Ms. Maribel Larracochea of Build Change, Ms. Golda Hilario of Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities, Engr. Fred Silisilon and TJ Topacio of BASE-Bahay Foundation, Inc., Arch. Redentor Elli and Engr. Onofre Bolhayon of Green Earth Resolution Philippines, Arch. Angelus Sales of TAO-Pilipinas, Inc., and Atty. Cecilia Dalupan of WeGen.

The presentations were mostly about alternative approaches to housing and renewable energy solutions. Build Change presented their retrofitting project in Metro Manila and their housing projects in Eastern Samar. BASE-Bahay Foundation, Inc. discussed their housing projects using bamboo. Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities presented their rainwater harvesting system while WeGen presented their projects utilizing renewable energy sources. For TAO-Pilipinas, Arch. Sales presented the participatory approach done by TAO and its recently concluded housing projects in Eastern Samar that featured disaster-resilient house construction. PCUP Commissioner Dr. Joan Lagunda also gave a brief presentation about the People's Survival Fund and emphasized the need to focus on climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives.

After the presentation, a brief open forum was held and moderated by Dr. Melissa Navarra of PCUP. During the open forum,

the invited speakers were asked about the challenges that they encountered in implementing their initiatives and how the government could assist them. Most of the speakers answered that difficulties lie in the permitting process especially for those in the renewable energy sector. The speakers also mentioned their request for DILG to facilitate faster permit processing.

The open forum was followed by a brief reaction from invited panel reactors. Among the invited panel reactors, only representatives from DILG, NEDA, Human Cities Coalition (HCC), and Partnership of Philippine Support Services Agencies, Inc. (PHILSSA) gave their comments regarding the presentations of the invited speakers. This forum was moderated by Mr. Vincent Eugenio of PCUP. The forum concluded with a closing remark from PCUP Commissioner Mr. Noe Indonto. (AMPS)

TAO architects speak at GMM of UAP Makati CBD Chapter

LAST NOVEMBER 17, TAO-Pilipinas was invited by the United Architects of Philippines (UAP) Makati CBD Chapter to give a lecture during their general membership meeting (GMM). The GMM was held at Max's Restaurant in Jupiter St. Makati City. The theme of the meeting was entitled, Fundamentals of Disaster Management and Preparation for the

'Big One'. The meeting was facilitated by their chapter president, Arch. Sophia Avendaño.

Invited speakers from TAO-Pilipinas were L. Arch. Rosanne Marie Aldeguer and Arch. Angelus Maria Sales. Architect Aldeguer talked about the basic concepts of disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) and also gave a

basic orientation about hazard maps. She briefly discussed the importance of hazard maps and which government agencies are responsible for producing various hazard maps such as fault maps, flood maps, and rain-induced landslide susceptibility maps. Her presentation was followed by Arch. Sales whose main topic focused on the "Big One". Arch. Sales first explained the science behind earthquakes and how earthquakes happen. She then proceeded to discuss about the effects

of an earthquake and expected scenarios when the "Big One" happens in Metro Manila.

The entire GMM ran for three hours with the lecture as the main agenda, interspersed with a product presentation about cement additives and waterproofing. Aside from the lectures and product presentation, their meeting also consisted of announcements of upcoming chapter activities and a raffle contest. (AMPS)

Fringes

by Therese R. Julia

Therese R. Julia is the latest addition to the TAO technical staff. Prior to being the research and documentation staff, she was accepted into the YP Internship Program and interned for TAO from October 2016 to April 2017. She graduated from the University of the Philippines, Diliman in 2016 with a degree in architecture. She shares her internship experience in the following article.



During her internship, Therese helped in the facilitation and documentation of several community hazards and resource mapping workshops such as in Brgy. Tandang Sora (top photo) and Damayan sa Floodway (bottom photo).

OCTOBER 2013 - WE BOARDED a jeepney that would take us to a far-flung resettlement site in Angat, Bulacan to facilitate an art workshop for the kids of Masagana Community. We were allotting a free Sunday as members of a student organization, UP Task Force Arki, in a joint project with TAO-Pilipinas. Three years later, I saw myself as a fresh graduate TAO intern boarding a van, along with TAO staff and a younger batch of TFA members, to visit the same Masagana Community for an upcoming soil stabilization project.

When I submitted three letters of interest to two small private firms and to a non-profit NGO last year, I just wanted to get a job, acquire the required experience, and take the licensure exam—immediate concerns of a fresh architecture graduate. I didn't know if any of them had an opening, I just picked

three potential employers in close proximity from home and waited for a response. Whichever of the three I ended up with, I'd leave after six months, just like most of the architects-in-training I know, and find another one to rack up hours for the logbook. TAO-Pilipinas happened to be the one with room to spare. I expected to jump ship after the three-month internship. Before I knew it, I had extended it to six months, and I eventually found myself asking about a non-intern post. With a stroke of luck and the stars aligning, I'm still here a year later.

A couple of friends who work at similar NGOs (LinkBuild and TAMPEI) gave me a synopsis of what working in this particular field entailed. Despite having been exposed to the work of these organizations in college (albeit lacking in a profound understanding

of the 'technical assistance' role at the time), I still had no idea what I was getting into. Going outside of your comfort zone is good for the health after all, or so I heard.

For a ridiculously fragile human being, there's always a degree of excitement with working on the ground in areas away from what is familiar. During my first house construction monitoring visits to Masagana, I got my foot stuck in a muddy backfill on three separate occasions. I just flailed helplessly each time and the residents would always come to my aid. One of the best decisions I made in life was to invest on rain boots for the succeeding field visits whenever Nanay would text me that it had rained in Masagana the previous night. Then again, nothing could have prevented me from slipping at the front yard of a lovely pink house during a post-occupancy evaluation in Manicani Island. I'm not the most graceful person out there.

I do have a tendency of throwing myself in situations that are physically and socially way in over my head. Who knew your face could become such a chromatic anomaly by producing the reddest shade when speaking in public? Much like my interview before being accepted as an intern, I had repressed the memory of my YP internship presentation. I do vividly remember the gibberish I uttered before releasing a primal scream as an introduction. That was hilarious. I hope that people on the other end of the line don't notice my voice quiver whenever I answer the phone.

Much like everyone else, I was a fish out of water when I started. It took me a couple of months to find my footing (although not literally because I still trip over thin air). This was practically uncharted territory that I wanted to dive right into. I wanted to read up on the concepts and learn the jargon, basically just about everything to be on the same page as everyone here (although progress has been slow because TAO's library is filled with other alluring titles). It

doesn't get easier, but it's all worth it. I get to be part of a world that isn't particularly visible in the field of architecture. I get the chance to attend seminars, facilitate or participate in workshops, immerse in diverse communities, show off my physical strength (or lack thereof) through pumping a deep well—opportunities that I probably wouldn't have accessed had I worked elsewhere.

As a student, you daydream about changing the world, curing cancer and whatnot; and when you step out of the confines of school, you find out that reality is too harsh for your predictably idealistic dreams. Although I've always been on the cynical side of the spectrum, I expected to wear out the glimmer of idealism I had as a fresh graduate pretty soon as I got accepted for an internship with a non-profit NGO. Yet, working with this organization surprised me.

I'm perpetually fascinated by the network of technical resource and assistance NGOs of various expertise in community development. It pains me to wax lyrical on this one, but initially learning about the PHILSSA and PMPI consortiums, especially Project Pagbangan, was like discovering superheroes from childhood come to life and band together to save the world, or something like that. Of course, the analogy is a bit of a stretch considering that these groups employ the participatory approach and self-help model in community planning and development. The communities themselves are the heroes of their own stories. They aren't just numbers in an infographic about poverty and housing crisis to alleviate. These are families, individuals, just trying to navigate this plane of existence like the rest of us, except with fewer resources. This is where the NGOs come in, to provide support.

While architecture is perceived to be a profession for the elite, there is a range of preconceived notion when it comes to working in an NGO as an architecture graduate. Contrary to popular belief, working

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Fringes... *(continued from page 6)*



Part of her internship enabled her to do numerous fieldwork including site visits to *Damayan sa Floodway* in Taytay (top photo) and *Manicani Island* in Guiuan, Eastern Samar (bottom photo).

with NGOs doesn't mean settling for less in terms of success in the field, or getting paid substantially for doing less; I haven't met a single self-righteous, pseudo-altruist in this line of work. The way I see it, it's no different than working elsewhere; we do our part as infinitesimal smidges in the universe, trying to make this world a little bit better for the rest of us, just like everybody else.

June 2010—through random draw, I was assigned to TFA during a freshmen orientation event organized by the student council. It was fun. I felt like I could get along with the members of an org that happened to be 'the service-oriented one' in college. I didn't consider applying for the other student orgs because sometimes I have tunnel vision. It's not a coincidence that TFA and TAO have been associated since the latter's establishment. Both of TAO's founders, along with several former and current staff, are TFA alumnae. Perhaps the random draw turned out to be a defining moment, as I had been instinctively led to this 'socially responsive' path. Or maybe I was just going to adapt to the first thing I associate with. Regardless, this is where I am, and it's something I want to pursue further.

Ultimately, I still have a long way to go. I'm probably too emotionally invested in the organization now, but I've only scratched the surface in terms of knowledge and skill in this line of work; and I hope to delve deeper into the field. Getting to the level of experience wherein I don't feel like a chicken with its head cut off anymore is a daunting and turbulent ride that I just want to fast-forward, but I'm excited all the same.



Therese gives a lecture about the basic concepts of disaster risk reduction and management during a community consultation workshop with Brgy. Tandang Sora.

Internship Postscript

from Herculhes Ebol

*Herculhes Ebol is a 5th year architecture student at University of Santo Tomas. He did his on-the-job training with TAO-Pilipinas from June to July 2017. This essay is a reflection piece after reading Fr. Jorge Anzorena's *Housing the Poor*. He also submitted a poem after completing his OJT.*

I WONDER IF THE WORLD HAS ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS --- PEOPLE of different social status living in the same dimension, except that they actually don't. Discrimination and ostracism are so evident but media and political campaigns are no longer covering this harsh truth well enough to open the eyes of citizens like me. The marginalized do often suffer injustice and unfair treatment but as I thumbed through the pages of Eduardo Jorge Anzorena S.J.'s "*Housing the Poor*", I have come to gradually understand the underlying strength they have within themselves.

The marginalized are the "majority" ones. They are the backbone of the economy of countries they are living in and yet they are denied of a right that all human beings deserve - to be able to have decent housing.

The only way in which the poor can be heard is when they are organized. It's the same as the saying, "a stick is no good on its own but if you bundle it with the other sticks, you can make a one good broom." It does makes sense, right? In a society which is increasingly hostile to the poor, the poor have to form organizations to be able to accomplish anything. Urban and rural poor groups located in different parts of the world have proved this effective. In a nutshell, it's a matter of taking things on their own hands and not relying on an erratic government.

However, merely having their own organizations is not enough to suffice their needs. That is when non-profit, non-government organizations come in. For me, they personify the image of an angel that assists oppressed

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Snapshots of Herculhes during his time working with TAO-Pilipinas. **Top photo:** He was able to experience facilitating a community consultation workshop during the 2017 YP Workshop on Social Housing. **Bottom photo:** He presented his initial scheme for the Masagana CBRC to TAO technical staff.

Internship Postscript... *(continued from page 7)*

people in any possible way they can. Earning just little to nothing, I admire how these groups converge to reach out to their destitute brothers and sisters.

Being poor is really tough; an experience one will never truly know about unless one has toiled under the sun and suffer burned flesh, all for a meal. The book elaborately describes how poor people are in dire need of aid but should not be labeled as a “burden” or “parasites” of society. Government programs, volunteer works, fundraisers, and financial support are just some ways to help the poor.

We don't choose the type of life we want to have when we are born. A lot of people live in dreadful conditions and we cannot just hope for utopia. It is just right that we do what we can to lend a hand to those who are in need.

We're Alike

We are all born naked in this world
Nothing but air to keep us alive
Yet somehow reality was curled
Not everyone is meant to survive

Before us are inequalities
Unfair weighing of the justice scale
But who are we gonna blame for this?
If this has become our nightly tale

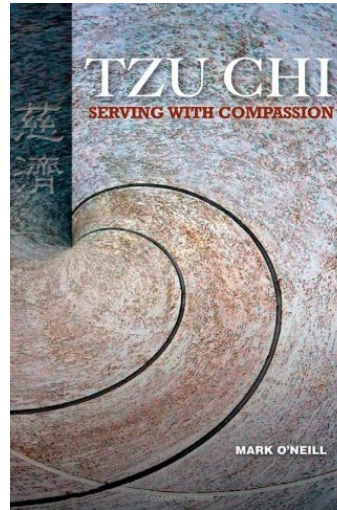
We've walked on the same dirt of the earth
Felt warmth on our skin with the same sun
Decent house they got none since their birth
Line of differences has begun

If we know that we can do something
Then why on earth are we sitting still?
Our brothers are already sinking
Would you like to experience the wheel?

As we try to strengthen their houses
We're building a stronger foundation
To prove that we're not just for business
We are to build a better nation



Herculhus was also able to visit Masagana in Angat, Bulacan several times to do construction monitoring and community validation workshop.



Title: **Tzu Chi Serving with Compassion**
Author: **Mark O'Neill**
Publisher: **John Wiley & Sons Asia (2010)**

Tzu Chi Foundation gained local prominence in the Philippines during the immediate aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan as an international organization that provided much needed aid and relief especially in the devastated areas. Apart from extending speedy

assistance to disaster victims, little has been known about the Taiwan-based organization. In this book, author Mark O'Neill introduces us to the largest NGO in the Chinese-speaking world and offers a comprehensive chronicle of the history and global outreach of the charitable foundation.

Tzu Chi is a Buddhist philanthropy founded on principles of brotherly compassion for those who are suffering. The book gives a fascinating account of how Cheng Yen, a poor Buddhist nun, started a movement in 1966 to help the poor and the sick in a small town in East Taiwan and directed its growth into what is today a worldwide organization of volunteers capable of giving quick humanitarian response in disaster events. Aside from providing relief and medical aid, the foundation runs schools, hospitals, a television channel, a university, and the biggest bone marrow bank in Asia.

The author tells about the work of the foundation across the globe, extending help and assistance to those in need regardless of race or religion and without imposing Buddhism on its beneficiaries. There are chapters devoted to Tzu Chi's overseas missions in China, Indonesia, South Africa, and the US, chronicling difficulties encountered in giving aid to remote areas and challenges overcome in navigating through different cultural and political landscapes. The book is definitely not short on positive affirmations and accounts of good deeds.

Readers will be impressed to discover of the foundation's capability to mobilize massive resources through generous donors and committed volunteers inspired by the charismatic Master Cheng Yen. The story of how Tzu Chi established its first hospital in Hualien is a testament to its spiritual leader's vision and tenacity. The book is quite an enlightening read about Buddhism that is not confined to temple worship and meditation. Relief goods and medical care are acts of giving delivered personally by Tzu Chi members and volunteers as an embodiment of “Buddhism in action”. Readers unfamiliar with the background, philosophy, and projects of Tzu Chi will find this book very informative and interesting. (GRM)