



Changing Lives.
Strengthening Families.
Empowering Communities.
Transforming the Nation.

Paglingap

2020

CCT GROUP OF MINISTRIES

The Social Transformation Partner of the Evangelical Community

Passion for God

Passion for the Philippines

Compassion for the Filipino Poor

Vision

We hope to see Christ-centered faith communities, where Jesus Christ is honored and worshiped, and where people live with dignity and sufficiency, in accordance with God's plan for a just, humane, and caring society.

Strategies

Discipleship and training of community servant leaders who will act as agents of transformation

Provision of wholistic and integrated services

Establishment of community-based organizations/institutions composed of the needy themselves who will serve as instruments of action and change

Approach

Our programs and services are wholistic, integrated, community-based, family-focused, long-term, sustainable, and transformational.

Mission

As followers of Jesus Christ, we join the Holy Spirit in God's work of transforming lives and communities.

Distinctive

We are Christian. We do everything for the glory of God, according to Biblical principles.

We testify to the nobility of the Filipino spirit and the heroism of our race.

We are Filipino. We were organized and are funded, governed, and managed by Filipinos.

We are a prayerful, worshiping, serving, witnessing, discipling, learning, teaching, and enterprising group.

We exercise preferential option for the poor.



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The President's Report: Why Paglingap?

Welcome to the first publication of Paglingap, a collection of stories of faith, hope, and courage. From earthquakes, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, and the COVID-19 pandemic, CCT had never experienced a deluge of catastrophes simultaneously affecting its communities in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao all in a span of just six months. But it is when darkness strikes that the light of the Gospel shines brightest. It is when we are helpless and hopeless that the faith of men and women rising up to the call becomes the cornerstone of our strength and joy.

Why do we need to write down this journey of faith and how God's people responded to His call? First, we want to honor the Lord for His faithfulness, loving kindness, and mercy to the people who called unto Him for help. Second, we wish to remember the commitment, perseverance, and generosity of our co-workers in sharing Christ's protective care despite being surrounded by devastation, sickness, and limited resources. This is the true meaning of the Gospel. This is the essence of **Paglingap**.

Allow me to share my heart's delight as I recalled how our senior staff responded when **Typhoon Ursula** hit the Visayas region on Christmas Eve in 2019. Braving the floods, and roads blocked with uprooted trees and broken light posts, Allan and Jojie Pardico, Pastor Nolie Dellero, and Rose Candole used their own resources and went out of their way to personally check on the conditions of the communities CCT has been serving in Panay, and distributed relief goods to the staff, community partners, and their neighbors. They also coordinated closely with our support office on the financial

assistance that could be provided by the Jehovah Jireh Credit Cooperative and CCT Mutual Benefit Association Inc., for members whose houses were either completely or partially damaged by the typhoon. Around 2,081 community partners and staff were affected in Roxas City, Pontevedra, and Maayon in Capiz, and Balasan, Estancia, and Ajuy in Iloilo.

With the help of our field staff, CCT was able to provide relief goods to more than 2,000 families. Thank you, Allan, Jojie, Pastor Nolie, and Rose, for bringing God's peace to the affected communities. May the good Lord be your reward as you continue to serve the Lord with a cheerful heart.

Still reeling from the devastation brought about by Typhoon Ursula, we then had to contend with the impact of the **Taal Volcano eruption** on January 12, 2020. Everyone was caught by surprise including the local government units (LGUs) in Cavite, Laguna, and Batangas. Relief efforts became more challenging as major roads to and from these areas were unpassable due to the ashfall. With the cities and municipalities isolated from the National Capital Region (NCR), our Cavite staff risked their health and safety by visiting our communities in Tagaytay City, Silang, Mendez, and Alfonso in Cavite and Talisay in Batangas, distributing face masks, bottled water, and ready-to-eat meals. More importantly, they prayed with the community partners and ministered to them as what Jesus would have done. As a result, over 2,000 families, which include staff, community partners, and the community at large, received relief assistance. My heartfelt gratitude goes to our staff in Cavite and Batangas for your dedication to help our communities and their families.

The CCT Tagaytay Retreat and Training Center (TRTC) was also not spared from the ashfall brought about by the volcano eruption. My initial reaction was to evacuate the 81 individuals, including scholars and volunteers, who were stranded inside the facility. But I was pleasantly surprised to find out that the topmost concern of the staff was to safeguard the facility and help restore its beauty. Even when barangay officials were pleading for the staff to evacuate, they chose to stay, to keep watch, and to clean off the facility of the hardened volcanic ashes on the ground, trees, flowers, and building rooftops. The spirit of volunteerism was truly alive in TRTC, which eventually became the relief hub for the Cavite and Batangas areas in partnership with the Cavite field staff. Only the Lord could have transformed something broken to become useful for His work of ministry. Praise be to our God and to the TRTC staff, scholars, and volunteers for your steadfast spirit.

Then came the **COVID-19 pandemic**. Again, no one was prepared for the prolonged enhanced community quarantine imposed by the government. Work stoppage, border closures, decreased revenues and donations, and stay-at-home orders—what will happen to the ministries caught in the middle of this pandemic? With nationwide ministry operations, the first order of the day was to secure the financial resources to eliminate possibilities of unauthorized withdrawals and fraud. Next, we had to find out how to help our community partners who lost their livelihood because of the quarantine. With restricted movements, no public transportation, strict curfew hours, shortage of basic food items, face masks, and other essentials, how do we raise funds, pack, and distribute relief goods while continuing to do ministry work? I praise the Lord for the team of CCT staff who led the fundraising and relief efforts during this pandemic—staff knowledgeable in fundraising and had the necessary connections to source the relief goods; staff who volunteered to help repack, get the necessary passes and certifications from the

LGUs, and distribute the relief goods to the affected communities; staff who documented and prepared the donor reports; and staff who recorded donations received and relief disbursements, issued official receipts and certificate of donations, and deposited checks. Only the Lord could have formed the de facto COVID-19 crisis management team whose passion was borne out of their love and commitment to the Lord and to His people. My deepest thanks to the team led by Arlene Sy, Timothy Lim, Marjun Baba, and Jinjin Abella. Seeing your faithfulness and perseverance toward God's work is truly an encouragement for our co-workers to emulate. May the Lord bless you dearly.

There are also stories of staff working with our former street dwellers at the Kaibigan Village in Nueva Ecija who chose to stay in the village rather than return to their respective homes. Together with the kaibigans, they volunteered to mobilize relief efforts and worked on the agricultural and construction projects for free. Others donated a portion of their salaries to help the ministry and willingly received three days worth of salary for six days work. To the staff at the Kaibigan Village, thank you for your heart of volunteerism.

The fruit of God's work is the evidence of His abiding presence with us. Relief work for the COVID-19 pandemic allowed us to partner with more than 20 churches and like-minded institutions to raise more than PhP7 million in cash and in-kind donations, and distributed over 12,000 relief packs to around 55 communities. Praise be to our God!

May you be blessed as you go through this report of God's favor and blessing to those whom He calls. God's peace be with you all!

In His Service,

Ruth S. Callanta
President





A single flower was seen blooming in TRTC despite its surroundings covered in thick ashfall—an assurance that God turns **beauty for ashes** (Isaiah 61:3).

A Year in Distress

As 2019 came to a close, several natural disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons hit the country.

During the first week of December 2019, Typhoon Tisoy (Kammuri) struck Luzon and some parts of Visayas as it made landfall four times, devastating more than 200,000 families. In CCT, 489 community partners from Northern Luzon and Eastern Visayas were affected by the typhoon. The fierce winds and heavy rains brought about by Tisoy disrupted 541 businesses of CCT community partners. Houses of three CCT staff were also partially damaged; and four CCT branches had an affected portfolio of PhP500,000.

While still recovering from Typhoon Tisoy, Typhoon Ursula (Phanfone) made landfall across the Visayas region amid the busyness of Christmas celebrations, affecting around 522,000 families. Instead of preparing for the Noche Buena, residents scurried off to brace for the typhoon that Christmas Eve. Despite their efforts, around 2,081 community partners and staff from Eastern Visayas, Panay, and Mindoro were devastated, disrupting 1,335 businesses, and closed down 68. The typhoon inflicted over PhP7 million worth of property and assets damage. It also caused 17 branches an affected portfolio of PhP20.5 million.

As 2020 opened, the sudden eruption of the Taal Volcano in Batangas devastated South Luzon. Heavy ashfall and powerful earthquakes caused by the

eruption affected CCT areas in Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Mindoro, and Quezon Province, and the National Capital Region, including Bulacan and Rizal. As a result, 45 CCT offices, 181 staff, and 31,457 community partners were affected. It also disrupted 268 sources of livelihood of the community partners, while 1,044 businesses had to close down. The CCT Multipurpose Cooperative (Multipurpose Co-op) suffered an affected portfolio of PhP44.8 million as well.

While South Luzon was still recovering from the Taal Volcano eruption, the whole country was shaken by the announcement of the first case of COVID-19 in the Philippines last January 30. Due to the rapid increase of cases worldwide, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a pandemic, prompting the Philippine government to implement enhanced community quarantine in March to slow down the spread of the virus. Businesses were closed down in compliance with the standards set by the government, affecting over 18,149 community partners who lost their jobs and sources of income.

In all these, the Lord remained faithful in sustaining both CCT and the communities it serves. Despite the uncertainties of this ever-changing world, CCT continues to hold fast to the certainty of God's Word—that "He is our refuge Who will never leave us nor forsake us." Thus, through the Paglingap (compassionate and protective care) initiative of CCT, the people were reminded of this truth in Christ amid the crises.

Paglingap: CCT Response

Paglingap as the First Response

Anchored on the Word of God and the burden to help the most vulnerable in time of need, CCT, by God's grace, has always responded to the call of the times.

When the storms, the volcanic eruption, and the pandemic struck the communities hard, CCT braced itself for immediate relief operations, health initiatives, continued discipleship and counseling, public service through broadcasting, and back to gardening campaign.

In all these, prayer without ceasing has been the foundation of every act of faith.

Paglingap in the Relief Operations

When **Tisoy** struck Eastern Visayas and Northern Luzon, CCT mobilized relief teams and were able to assist close to 500 community partners including a few affected staff.

When **Ursula** hit the Visayas region and some parts of Mindoro on December 24, 2019, CCT staff and volunteers, led by Allan and Jojie Pardico, Rose Candole, and Pastor Nolie Dellero were already on the road to provide relief assistance the following day, Christmas day. They braved through the rough drive with floods, uprooted trees, broken light posts, and displaced animals. Roxas City, as well as the towns of

President Roxas, Pilar, Pontevedra, and nearby towns looked like ghost towns with disrupted electricity and closed establishments. Out of their own pockets, they bought relief packs worth PhP500 each that blessed around 50 affected co-workers and community partners in Capiz, Aklan, and Northern Iloilo.

The following day, some community partners also joined in the relief packing, and then in visiting the evacuation centers for fellowship, prayer, and food distribution.

In no time, the CCT Multipurpose Cooperative (Multipurpose Co-op), Jehovah Jireh Credit Cooperative (JJ), and CCT Mutual Benefit Association Inc. (CCT MBA), came to the communities' aid. Bro. Stephen Chan, a member of the Panay Regional Advisory Council, also mobilized prospects for donations.

More than 2,000 community partners and 23 staff in Eastern Visayas, Panay, and Mindoro benefitted from the relief operations. They all expressed gratitude to the Lord for using CCT to be the first to respond and for giving rice, groceries, and used clothing of good quality. Some were also extended with housing assistance.

When the **Taal Volcano** shocked the nation with its sudden eruption, God's grace enabled CCT to immediately render relief initiatives. CCT, Inc., Multipurpose Co-op, CCT MBA, CCT Community





Community servant leaders joyfully volunteered to help in the facility cleanup and repacking of the relief goods in TRTC.

Fellowship Inc., (CFI), CCT Ministers Association of the Philippines (CMAP), JJ, along with the rest of the CCT Group, mobilized the relief initiatives. With the help of ministry partners and friends, on the initial week itself, CCT visited the affected areas and brought relief goods to over 300 families in Talisay, Batangas, and in Silang and Tagaytay City, Cavite. Recipients included not only CCT community partners and staff, but also the surrounding communities through the bayanihan groups.

Later on, the relentless work of CCT staff, community partners, and pastors continued the relief operations, extending help to more families and communities in 24 areas in Tagaytay City, 13 areas in Cavite, and two areas in Batangas. Over 2,000 families were blessed by the efforts. Through CCT donors, they were provided with food, rice, water, hygiene kits, clothes, blankets, N95 masks, as well as prayer and counseling.

And then came the pandemic and still ongoing as of this writing.

When **COVID-19** disoriented the world, putting lives and livelihood at stake, the “normal life” we long enjoyed yet less appreciated most of the time, seemed to be a thing of the past. Along with the health scare is the economic meltdown that left people crying out for food. Relief aid became a banner cry not only of the poor themselves, but even of the middle class.

While it has been more challenging to do relief operations amid a pandemic, the conviction and courage of the CCT crisis management team paved the way for CCT communities nationwide to receive urgent assistance. The outreach of the relief operations included the NCR, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Pampanga, Tarlac, Abra, Cabanatuan, Dagupan, Cagayan, and Palawan in Luzon; Panay, Negros, Cebu, Bohol, Samar, Leyte, and Biliran in Visayas; and Davao, CARAGA, Cagayan de Oro, General Santos-Sarangani, Maguindanao, Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat in Mindanao.

Made possible by the partnership with faith-based organizations, CCT distributed over 9,000 food packs consisting of five kilos of rice, canned goods, biscuits, and noodles. Hundreds of kilos of rice and truckloads of vegetables were sourced from CCT’s rice plantation at an integrated farming center in Lupang Pangako in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija.

Also part of the relief operations were the tribal communities of the Aetas in Iloilo and Badjaos in General Santos. The regional offices distributed close to 3,000 relief packs in their respective areas.

In total, over 12,000 food packs, medicines, and health kits were distributed to the needy communities where CCT operates its various social services and where its partner organizations run their ministries.

Paglingap in the Health Initiatives

Understanding the vitality of healthcare in times of disasters, the CCT health team led by its dedicated resident physician, Dr. John Tabije, ran a series of medical mission, disseminated health advisories, and set up helpline in the affected CCT communities.

After the Taal Volcano eruption, CCT, through the Visions of Hope Foundation, conducted medical missions in Calamba, Laguna; Apiad, Silang; and Tagaytay City. More than 600 families were assisted with adults and children as beneficiaries.

During the visitations, psychosocial therapy sessions were also conducted among children in trauma through art activities, fun games, and gift giving.

CCT pastors and workers from the Multipurpose Co-op and the Kaibigan Ministry also shared the Gospel to the parents while each family received a Bible.

Meanwhile, **during the COVID-19 crisis**, more health initiatives were also rolled out.

A health advisory on the virus was cascaded to all CCT offices and branches even before the lockdown in March.

A COVID-19 Health Protocol for staff was also drafted to further educate and prepare them against the virus. Safety Protocols at Work were also documented in collaboration with other microfinance institutions and Water.Org. Developed specifically for CCT, it has since been rolled out to the CCT staff.

Online health consultations were made possible through the use of technology via mobile phones, Facebook (FB) Messenger, and FB page of CCT Health and Wellness, accessible 24/7.

In partnership with Reliv Kalogris Foundation, Reliv NOW for kids were distributed. More than 800 cans of food supplement were gladly received by the Rose of Sharon House of Friendship and CCT Magdalena Community Center in Laguna, CCT-Visions of Hope Christian School in Payatas, Kaibigan Center in Pasay City, along with the recipients of the feeding program in Parola, Tondo and the Aetas in Janiuay, Iloilo.

And when typhoons struck the country, CCT area and branch offices on their own, immediately mobilized their team to extend as much health assistance to affected staff and community partners.

Dr. John Tabije, together with the CCT health team, conducted medical missions in the communities affected by the Taal Volcano eruption.



Paglingap through Continued Discipleship

Spiritual development has always been integral to CCT and God's work of transformation. Even in the catastrophe, the journey of discipleship continues.

During the relief efforts in the typhoon-hit areas, in the affected communities of the Taal Volcano eruption, and everywhere because of the pandemic, the Word of God is always the reliable source of refuge and hope. Ministering and praying for the distressed community partners and fellow workers have been an innate calling for every CCT worker.

As discipleship is about life transference, pastors from CFI and CMAP, along with the CCT support and field staff, joined the cleanup of the CCT Tagaytay Retreat and Training Center (TRTC) in the aftermath of the Taal Volcano eruption. While TRTC was covered with volcanic ashes, the bayanihan spirit in CCT enabled it to recover and bloom once more.

Discipleship in the Time of COVID-19

When the community quarantine was enforced by the government due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were concerns as to how the church would continue with the suspension of the physical gathering. But God, in His grace, turned the situation into an opportunity to reach out to more through online discipleship.

The quarantine period mobilized CCT disciples of Christ in planting the seed of the unadulterated

Gospel, as they took the message online unimpeded by physical constraints. In a beautiful unfolding never seen before in the history of CCT, God's glorious message permeated social media platforms and airwaves: Zoom, Facebook Live, Messenger, to name a few. Families gathered to hear and study God's Word. People reconnected to meet online and fellowship. Messages reached across provinces, countries, and even continents.

The CCT support office hosted weekly online discipleship sessions every Friday linking staff from all over the country with CCT's Board and Regional Council members, Head Shepherd, and CFI/CMAP Pastors at the helm, including Bro. Lawrence De Los Santos, Pastor Edmon Ngo, Pastor Joe Ascalon, Pastor Cito Candole, Pastor Rommel Baliton, Pastor Erich Velasco, and Pastor Jury Girado.

Thirty CFI/CMAP Pastors—20 in NCR/Luzon, one in Palawan, four in Visayas, and five in Mindanao—have all been actively involved in their distanced ministry platforms. Even internet signal issues did not stop the pastors from sharing God's message, as they printed outlines and sent it to nearby houses. Yes, in "even if" moments, God empowers His disciples in their divine assignments.

Paul says it perfectly, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: 'Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.'" (Romans 10:17-18)

Virtual Bible Studies and Discipleship with CFI members





Paglingap On-Air and Online

All in the mainstream and social media news...

Health scare. Community quarantine. People on lockdown. Business closure. Lay-offs. Economic meltdown. Social and physical distancing. Mental and emotional distress. Food scarcity. Cases and casualties. A global crisis, felt and dreaded.

Where could communities, particularly those in far-flung areas, get their much-needed information and support system in these harsh times? For CCT and its community radio, in partnership with the Far East Broadcasting Company, this is where the tagline, *Unang Tugon ng Pamayanahan* (First Response of the Community), becomes a greater expression and demonstration of the Gospel—the Good News that is much sought amid the chaos.

Immediately after the government implemented the lockdown, 97.5 DYFE-FM, delivered a new programming that caters to the needs of its listeners and viewers through CCT Bayanihan, Paglingap Special Coverage. This includes segments on key updates about the virus at the national level, health advisories and hygiene tips via the Lingap Pangkalusugan, info-exchange on the status and condition of the CCT communities across the regions, and sharing the Word of God delivered by the members of the CCT Regional Advisory Councils in Visayas and in Mindanao. Listeners and viewers are being strengthened and renewed—finding a ray of love and light as our CCT regional board magnified

the hope that is in Christ over the turmoil caused by COVID-19.

With the Word of God touching more hearts and enjoining families for prayer and worship, along with the genuine and protective care for neighbors and the neediest, people see and experience the hand and heart of God in all these. Society has gone back to the most essential—that is, valuing the brevity of life and living to please God. In its own humble way, Paglingap On-Air and Online renders its share of the Great Commission and Kingdom pursuits.

DYFE's regular programs have also continued to encourage the listening and viewing public. Pamalandong by Pastor Cito Candole and Inspirations Unlimited by Ate Chello Daga are consistent program favorites. Equally notable is the commitment of the radio station staff who chose to stay in the station during the enhanced community quarantine, and even up to the general community quarantine.

Simply put, the Paglingap On-Air and Online has become a go-to platform not only for reliable news and public affairs, but also and more importantly, a love and care ministry in the “new normal”. More than ever, the power of the radio ministry is realized and experienced.

97.5 DYFE-FM has been signing on and serving the communities since May 2018. CCT community radio airs from Monday to Saturday, from 5am until 8pm. While DYFE is Tacloban-based, it reaches listeners in the whole of Leyte provinces including Biliran, Marabut, Catbalogan, and the islands of

Western Samar. With livestream via Facebook Live, it is also being accessed by audiences from all over the country and even by patrons overseas. Besides the regular radio hosts, volunteer anchors from the community also help in the programming.

"We, frontliners and barangay officials, are tuning in to DYFE. Thank you for encouraging the people in the midst of what we are facing. Damo nga salamat! (Thank you very much!)" – **Adelina Abad, Palo, Leyte**

"Thank God because there is a radio station that gives hope to the hopeless like me. Listening to your programs from 5am until afternoon, I've learned to entrust all my worries to the Lord. Praise God, my then estranged husband returned home. Also, my 86-year-old mother is always tuned in to DYFE the whole day. Even our neighbors are also switching to DYFE." – **Vilma Rosario, Guinbalot-an, Sta. Rita, Samar**

"I am a Christian. I came from Samar. Since I transferred here in Biliran, I have not been able to go to church, even too busy to open my Bible. One day, when I turned on the radio at 5am, I chanced upon 97.5 FM and listened to Pamalandong. From then on, my radio is always tuned in to DYFE. The more I listen, the more I hunger for the Word of God. Thank you also for playing Christian music."

– **Arlyn Gallo, Julita, Biliran**

"I am a Christian and DYFE helped me in sharing my faith among my neighborhood. It used to be that every time I listened to your station, my neighbors would get mad—all the more I put the volume high. In doing so, today we listen to DYFE together."

– **Melody Duran, Palo, Leyte**

Paglingap in Balik sa Lupa

With divine anticipation, even before the pandemic, the CCT Group has started its efforts on backyard gardening. The Balik sa Lupa (Back to Gardening) campaign encouraged all ministry workers and CCT communities to go back to the land, till, and nourish it for productivity and food sufficiency.

When COVID-19 hit the communities, the enhanced community quarantine implemented by the government to prevent the spread of the virus resulted to food scarcity across the nation. In response, CCT further intensified its advocacy on planting in own backyards, or even in pots to some extent in the urban areas, and raising livestock to help put food on their tables.



From the Children and Youth Ministry

Even before the community quarantine, CCT Visions of Hope has been teaching the children under their care the value of patience and discipline through gardening. Selected students participated in land preparation and planting seedlings, as well as taking care and harvesting crops such as sweet potato and cassava. When the community quarantine kept the children inside their residential homes, gardening became a part of each child's daily routine. In a span of two and a half months, they planted, grew, and harvested lady's finger, eggplant, cabbage, red pepper, cucumber, mustard, moringa, sweet potato, cassava, jute, malabar spinach, squash, sponge gourd, zucchini, water spinach, string beans, monggo, tomato, turnip, sunflower, papaya, banana, pigeon pea, lettuce, onion, ginger, and different



Ate Chello of Inspirations Unlimited

herbs and spices. They even raised livestock and had quail eggs for months. Enjoying the fruits of their labor, their produce has been feeding close to a hundred individuals in the residential homes. Their produce also helped the ministry save money, saving them a total of 85% of their total food expenses.

From the Street Ministry

The CCT Lupang Pangako in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, a resettlement village for former street families, has always been an agricultural haven. Also known as the Kaibigan Village (KV), a close to seven hectares of its 32-hectare land is dedicated for agriculture and animal husbandry. With F.A.I.T.H. (Food Always in the Home) program, all households are enjoined to do backyard gardening. From the very beginning, KV residents have reaped the benefits of growing a garden. Because of this practice, the community reaped plentiful harvests of vegetables like string beans, tomatoes, lady's fingers, eggplant, squash, and chili peppers—all more than enough for their daily consumption. In fact, the harvest and produce from KV were also given to the Paglingap relief efforts across Luzon during the pandemic lockdown.

Truly a testimony for the former street dwellers—from nursing their empty stomachs to putting food on their own table, the kaibigans are now helping the communities for food supply.



From the CCT Retreat and Training Centers

Some of the workers locked down in **TRTC** chose to work and be productive through the Balik sa Lupa campaign. The workers started tilling the land and made several garden plots, enough to plant various kinds of fruits and vegetables such as squash, bitter gourd, string beans, okra, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, malabar spinach, and water spinach. The harvest, while not that much, surely added flavor and more nutrition to their meals of sardines and chicken from the local government's relief assistance.

Aside from the crops planted, there were also banana trees in the area and the harvest was also served in their meals. To TRTC's surprise, watermelons also emerged! No one knew who planted them, but they were indeed blessings from above.

When the **CCT Malungon Retreat and Training Center (MRTC)** resorted to suspend operations to comply with the government's lockdown policies, the MRTC staff were left without work and income to support and feed their families. In response, the CCT Ministry among Tribespeople allotted a piece of land in the MRTC compound to encourage and teach the staff to grow their food. The staff brought this practice back to their homes and encouraged their neighbors and community to value the land they inherited from their ancestors and start planting again.



Testimonies from the Affected Communities of the Taal Volcano Eruption

While the Taal Volcano eruption brought volcanic ashes, our faith is in the Lord Who brings us the assurance to turn **beauty for ashes.**

"When I came to check the situation at CCT Tagaytay, I was moved by the heart of our people. They just won't leave out of concern for TRTC, guarding it from looting. But thinking about their safety first, I really had to make them all evacuate." - Ate Ruth S. Callanta, President, CCT Group of Ministries

"We, in TRTC, have resolved to trust that God is in control. Therefore, we believe that hope will arise out of this devastation."

- Leilani Heramis, General Manager, TRTC

"Thank you for all those who helped our family. It is my source of joy to see you here in Lemery, Batangas, even in the midst of the calamity. God bless CCT family." - A Covenant Community Builder (CCT Microfinance Officer)

"We stopped our soy production because we had no water and electricity... Even if we were all devastated, we still helped each other."

- A CCT Community Partner in Taal

"When the ashfall became so muddy, we waited for any relief. We carried buckets, waiting for anyone to give us water. An ambulance passed by but the only thing it gave us were two pieces of bread and a bottle of drinking water. We are thankful to CCT because they returned the following day and blessed us with relief goods and face masks." - Survivors in San Guillermo, Talisay

"We were scared when we heard of the news that there will be another eruption and earthquake. My husband looked at our cucumber trees and said, 'Laban lang!' (Fight on!) Funny enough, I looked at our chickens and saw them fighting. Maybe they did not recognize each other because of the ashes covering them."

- A CCT Community Partner in Talisay

"Thank you, CCT. You are very unlike other microfinance institutions. We can't make our loan payments because we are unable to work. Despite our failure to pay, CCT still distributed relief goods to our families."

- Community Partners from Mendez, Cavite



"Thank you, CCT, for all your help. The ashfall from Taal has severely affected our crops. I am grateful because we were just waiting for help, and then these people came to distribute relief goods."

- Nanay Ajelia Cantonjos, Dapdap West, Tagaytay City



"For me, I'd rather lose everything than lose a loved one. I will begin anew from what's left of me."

- Marvin Castillo, Dapdap West, Tagaytay City



"When we learned that the Taal Volcano is erupting, we rushed to leave our home and ran to a high place. Strong earthquake pounded while my daughter and I nervously walked alongside my old mother-in-law. We feared that we might not be able to come back home and live normal lives again, but we trust that God will help us to get back up again."

- Mary Antonette Enriquez, Tagaytay City



"We were advised by the barangay officials to evacuate, but we didn't. We can't leave our store. After several days of the Taal Volcano eruption, we had no source of income, because only few people can buy from our store."

- Josephine Alarna, Tagaytay City



"Our elders told us that in 1911, the Taal Volcano eruption killed many in our sitio. We thank God that none of us died in the recent volcano eruption.

During the turmoil, we feared for our lives because of the strong earthquake. In just one day, we experienced countless earthquakes.

For two days, families resorted to stay indoors.

After a week, our harvest was affected by the ashfall. We depend on our harvest for our daily staple.

Praise God for CCT in extending their help. Although our location is hard to reach, they came here to help."

Librado Atienza
Barangay Security Officer
Sitio Balagbag, Canlubang, Calamba, Laguna





Paglingap: Celebrating the Heroism of the CCT Communities

The vision behind CCT has always been God-inspired. He is the One who grew CCT into what it is now, and He alone has sustained it through all these years. By His grace, He also sent men and women who willingly, selflessly, and relentlessly journeyed with the poorest of the poor toward transformation.

Among these men and women are the community servant leaders (CSLs) whose lives were transformed through God's Word during the weekly fellowship meetings and now joyfully paying it forward by serving in their communities. When the Taal Volcano erupted, the CCT Tagaytay Retreat and Training Center (TRTC) was damaged due to the ashfall. With their extraordinary dedication and commitment, 170 CSLs regularly volunteered for a whole month in cleaning up the property. Together with the pastors, staff, and kaibigan workers from Kalikid and Cabrera, they prayed and worked in restoring TRTC to its original beauty.

CSLs once again showed their dedication to CCT during the pandemic when they also volunteered to be part of the relief operations. Nanay Elsa Reloj, chairwoman of the CSLs in Muntinlupa, spearheaded the distribution herself among her fellow partners. When her colleagues in the city health office learned about her relief efforts, they allowed her to use their vehicle for easier distribution of the goods. They also gave her more food items to share among CCT community partners. Another is Nanay Josie Galas from General Santos City who, together with regional council chairperson, Bro. Jan Ced, gave food packs to 25 savings group members from a Badjao

community. CSLs in Silang, Cavite and Batasan also held their own feeding program and relief operations during the lockdown, helping a total of 72 families in their areas.

CCT staff has always responded to the needs of the communities especially in times of calamities, readily sacrificing their time, personal resources, and even risking their own safety. Among them are Allan and Jojie Pardico, Rose Candole, and Pastor Nolie Dellero who spent their Christmas reaching out to staff and community partners affected by Typhoon Ursula; Shiera Ondangan and team who visited the community partners in Samar devastated by Typhoon Ursula days after the floods had subsided; and Michael Salili who mobilized the staff in South Luzon to minister to the communities affected by the Taal Volcano eruption amid the ongoing ashfall. Despite the threat of a possible violent eruption, TRTC General Manager Leilani Heramis, workers, and scholars refused to evacuate the center out of their personal conviction to protect the property and faith that God would protect them.

Meanwhile during the COVID-19 outbreak, the economy was at a standstill as the government's declaration of enhanced community quarantine resulted to temporary closure of businesses and company layoffs. To respond to the needs of the staff and community partners affected by the pandemic, CCT formalized its crisis management team led by Ate Ruth Callanta, Jinjin Abella, Arlene Sy, Marjun Baba, and Timothy Lim. With their

passion, commitment, and various expertise, the crisis management team modeled convergence as they worked together in raising funds and securing necessary passes from the local government units for the relief operations. They also ensured proper documentation of donations and timely disbursement of salaries of staff and other transactions.

Trusting that the Lord is their fortress and reward, staff, pastors, drivers, and kaibigan workers supported the crisis management team by volunteering in the relief operations notwithstanding the risk of contracting the virus themselves. In Manila, the administration and repacking of goods was done in the support office. Truly, the bayanihan spirit was evident as the team distributed more than 12,000 relief packs nationwide.

Similarly, in other provinces, the Multipurpose Co-op staff were also moved by the Holy Spirit to reach out to their communities. Despite the health safety measures and movement restrictions, the staff found ways to help their fellowmen through their own initiative and creativity. Eric Desolong, a covenant community builder in Maayon, Capiz, also took the initiative to seek the mayor's approval in reopening

the CCT branch for partners who wanted to pay off their loans and apply for loan renewal since planting season was about to start. Because of this, the mayor recognized CCT's sincerity in helping the farmers in Maayon and Pontevedra, Capiz, which further strengthened CCT's relationship with the local government. CCT has also received invitations for the cooperative to open in other barangays in Maayon.

To make themselves productive, kaibigan workers who were in TRTC and Lupang Pangako during lockdown volunteered to continue their construction projects with whatever available materials. Pastor Rommel Dancel, a CFI pastor, also went the extra mile by voluntarily doing nightly rounds around their barangay for security checks since the lockdown started. There are also nameless staff who supported feeding programs in their respective barangays out of their own initiative.

For CCT, these stories of how the CCT communities responded in times of crisis are glimpses of hope—that through the highs and lows of ministry work, the Lord remains faithful to those who heed His call and He will always be "our very great reward" (Genesis 15:1).



Volunteers at the support office preparing the relief goods for distribution



Paglingap in Kingdom Partnership



The Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture is among the many faith-based organizations that CCT partnered with in providing relief assistance to the communities.

Becoming the Social Transformation Partner of the Evangelical Community

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in heaven."

-Matthew 5:16

What is the best Christian witness? It is when faith is put into action. When the COVID-19 pandemic brought devastating effects in the economy and society, it did not only shake people's finances but also exposed their hearts.

CCT believes that the Christian witness should shine the brightest for such a time as this. This was proven to be true when different faith-based organizations like evangelical churches, Christian schools, corporations, and individuals easily partnered and supported CCT in its relief operations. Colleagues who were not receiving income due to the "no work, no pay" arrangement, still gave without hesitation. Students whose classes were suspended donated money they saved from their allowance. Drivers who were retrenched voluntarily helped transport relief goods without expecting anything in return. Those who saw CCT's call for donations online gave generously, even without knowing anything about

CCT. Some even went out of their way to go to a physical bank just to give their share. CCT was able to raise almost PhP4 million in cash donations from March to May, and most of the donations were given anonymously. Many business owners also reached out to CCT to share goods like bread, pizza, meat, water, snacks, food condiments, along with toiletries, alcohols, vitamins, and masks for the different beneficiaries of CCT. Many individuals went straight to the branches, centers, and residential homes to share their blessings.

CCT was also blessed with local and international partners who responded quickly to its invitation to help out those who are in need, as well as assist CCT to sustain its programs.

When CCT ceased operations for most of its branches and offices because of the community quarantine and lockdown policies, it still continued to house and care for former street families, elderly, children and youth, and construction workers in its various facilities. One of its partner schools, MGC New Life Christian Academy, extended its support over the rescued street children housed by Visions of Hope in its residential homes. Another partner,

Wholistic Transformation Resource Center, also provided grants for construction workers staying in CCT's housing project in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija. Consuelo Zobel Alger Foundation also helped out in sustaining the operations of CCT's center for infants and former street dwellers in Dasmariñas, Cavite.

For areas that do not commonly receive relief, HOPE International, a long-time partner of CCT for its microfinance ministry, stepped in to provide for the communities served by CCT outside Metro Manila (Batangas, Palawan, Laguna, Visayas, and Mindanao areas). Another long-time partner, End Poverty, raised a "Mercy Fund" to support the relief operations as well. A new partner, OneChild also provided relief assistance for tribal families served by CCT's tribal school in Palawan.

Aside from monetary assistance to sustain CCT operations, Partnering for Economic Empowerment and Renewal (PEER Servants), another long-time partner of CCT, has initiated and convened its international partners across the globe for a Zoom meeting every week for a time of prayer. CCT joins these meetings as the representative for the Philippines, as the PEER Servants Network intercedes for the country, for the CCT Group of Ministries, and the different communities it is serving.

Truly, these kingdom partnerships and interventions are God-sent as CCT overcomes this crisis with Christ as the lead.



Faith in Action

The community quarantine has only brought the evangelical community even closer as CCT partnered with various churches in heeding God's call to help communities heavily affected by the lockdown. CCT has always aimed to be the social transformation partner of the evangelical community, and this has been more evident in its relief operations with several churches taking part of the said initiative.

One of the first who responded was the Bread from Heaven Christian Fellowship, who provided financial help to support CCT's beneficiaries who depend on CCT daily. Union Church of Manila, Greenhills Christian Fellowship, and Chinese Bible Church of Greater Boston followed suit and assisted CCT in its first days of relief operations.

For Victory Christian Fellowship (Victory), working with CCT was an answered prayer. Mae Perez, executive director of Real LIFE Foundation, shared that CCT's call for support came in the right time as Victory was planning on its own relief efforts as well. "It was great, Victory was looking for a way to look into our communities but couldn't figure how. When CCT came in, they have the people on the ground. The arrangement was that we are to provide them the goods, and they have the people to distribute them. It was such a perfect partnership," Mae shared.

True enough, Victory donated 3,000 relief packs consisting of five kilos of rice, canned goods, noodles, coffee, and hygiene kits. Funds from different congregations of Victory were pooled together to support this initiative. CCT distributed these relief packs to more than 36 distressed communities where Victory and CCT operate.

"This is what really impressed me with CCT. We were very specific with the details for the drop-offs, yet they still did them for us. Furthermore, it was not just a matter of dropping these goods. I saw that CCT's staff really talked to the recipients, asked how they were, and prayed for them," Mae expressed. She stressed how "very personal" CCT related with the beneficiaries, and that made a difference. "CCT went over and beyond," Mae added. "Relief goods don't last long, but the hope that they bring to the people is something that will last even beyond the pandemic," she said.



CCT volunteers repacking the donations from various churches, organizations, and institutions

This experience had a great impact to the members of Victory. Mae confessed that the hearts of church members just wanted to help their fellow citizens in whatever way possible, and the Paglingap relief effort gave a platform for these acts of kindness to reach those who needed help the most. "The donors were just really assured that whatever help they give really goes to the people who are in need," she shared.

Aside from partnering with mega churches like Victory, CCT was equally blessed to partner with smaller churches such as Glory Evangelical Church (GEC) who had the same eagerness to help. "We were connected to CCT through Rainier Chu, who knew of Prof. Ron Chua (chairperson, CCT Multipurpose Cooperative)" Robinson Chu, member and relief coordinator of GEC, recalled.

GEC and CCT's partnership in the relief effort started with GEC's intent to reach out to the Paco community near their church. "Because we did not have the logistics, it made sense to partner with CCT who had the manpower to reach out to the affected community members," Robinson stated. CCT then coordinated with local barangay officials and helped distribute relief goods to different households in the Paco area. "Everyone started to get excited upon seeing the pictures and reports sent by CCT, and through that, the church was prompted to extend more assistance," Robinson confessed.

By God's grace, GEC was blessed to offer additional help to CCT, especially in supporting pastors that were similarly affected by the lockdown. "We messaged Arlene Sy, who was coordinating the relief program with us, and shared about our burden to help pastors," Robinson recalled. "Arlene told me that CCT has a church planting ministry and association of pastors, and that they need support too, so it was really orchestrated by the Lord from the start," Robinson testified.

GEC was also supporting a missionary evangelizing in a Muslim community in Tandang Sora, and thought of extending support to affected members of the community. God provided for funds and manpower, and CCT was able to reach out to the community and helped more than 200 Muslim families with relief packs. One of the mothers shared how surprised they were to receive so much help as their area was greatly affected by the lockdown.

For Robinson, partnering with CCT during the relief operations allowed their church to do ministry work and help the poor just as Jesus taught in the Bible. "In the Scriptures, Paul reminds us to remember the poor, hence it has a close link to the Gospel ministry," Robinson declared. He added, "if we have heaven in mind, we will part with earthly things such as buildings and structures, instead focus on saving lives."

According to Ritvalsky in his commentary at Acton.org, "how we love the poor is a clear indicator of how we understand God's love for us." Indeed, being able to partner with various churches in CCT's Paglingap relief effort allowed this love to be translated in the language that the poor understands. Mae testified, "I can see the workers of CCT that they don't treat this as just their day job. I saw how the Holy Spirit moved in them, and I pray that in this time and season, they will keep the faith, trust in the Lord to sustain us, and see the impact that CCT will have in the community."

Whatever act of service to the poor is neither small nor big in the eyes of the Lord. "And through these means, the Lord will bless our hands and He will multiply," Robinson shared. As the nation continues to move forward, may the Lord continue to pave way for CCT to work hand-in-hand with the evangelical community in the expansion of His Kingdom.

"Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand."

-Proverbs 19:21





Supermarket

Feature Stories

Taal Volcano Eruption Diary

by: Leilani Heramis
General Manager, CCT Tagaytay Retreat and Training Center

When I heard that the Taal Volcano erupted, my knees became weak and my heart pounded fast. I tried to keep calm as I inched myself toward Ate Ruth. Moving closer, my mind raced, "How can I break the news to her without shedding tears?" Had I been alone that time, I would have cried hard already thinking how ugly TRTC would become. I had to be careful not to disturb the peace and quiet that Ate Ruth was experiencing at that time. We were in a retreat in Lupang Pangako, Nueva Ecija. So, with a trembling but controlled voice, I whispered, "Ate, pumutok daw po ang Taal (Ate, the Taal Volcano erupted)," and showed her the video posted on Facebook. She answered, "please tell them to go inside the rooms and close the windows." That calm and collected response relaxed me a bit.

When I got back to TRTC, I couldn't help myself but cry and kneel before the Lord. Ninety-nine percent of the 7.5 hectare-property was covered with two to three inches of sticky and foamy mud. I said, "Lord, tell me how and where I should start the cleaning and rehabilitating process." The following day, workers from the Kalikid and Cabrera manpower services came. It was a delight to see everyone taking part in the cleanup.

Then we were told by the barangay officials that there was a threat of a possible violent eruption so everybody had to evacuate. I gathered everyone. We prayed. I told the workers and scholars the news and asked who would like to evacuate. Hands were raised and so I said, "I will let the scholars go first." As the scholars were queuing, one of them looked at me and asked, "Ikaw, Ate Lani, aalis ka ba dito? (How about you, Ate Lani, are you leaving?)" I answered, "Hindi, dito lang ako (No, I will stay here.)"

On my mind, how could I leave this place? Robbers will feast in here. Then I heard, "Ay, hindi rin po kami aalis.

Dito lang po kami. (Oh, we will not leave as well. We will stay here.)" The other workers seconded. They didn't want to leave. I was moved to tears but I controlled myself.

This is *malasakit* (compassion). *Walang iwanan. Sama-sama anupaman ang mangyari.* (No one will be left behind. We will be together whatever happens.)

Besides having the support of the TRTC workers and scholars, we were also blessed with community servant leaders from the CCT Multipurpose Cooperative who helped us clean our facility. CCT pastors and staff also joined in the cleanup. A week later, the area was split into sections to hasten the rehabilitation. Each team was provided with cleaning tools and materials.

Morning after morning, we sought God's sustenance. Day by day, we helped each other so that the grass would be green again and the flowers would grow afresh.

And we did it. A month and a half later, TRTC bloomed once more!





Nanay Lorna Daliwan, a COVID-19 survivor and CCT partner

Christ over Crisis: Stories of Faith amid a Pandemic

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19, many companies and organizations have shown their support to the Filipino families by giving supplies and relief goods.

CCT also responded to the call of the neediest during this season. Through the initiatives of the CCT Group, thousands of families have been blessed physically, emotionally, and spiritually—considering that there are communities which are difficult to reach and some families did not receive supplies and financial aid from the government.

Nanay Elsa Reloj, a community servant leader (CSL) in Muntinlupa shared, “our members have not received any assistance from the government. Thank you to CCT. They are always ready to help those in need, particularly in times like this.”

The limited operating hours have also affected some of the businesses of the community partners. “No one is buying from my store. It has really affected my profit. I already can’t afford our household needs,” said Nanay Amparo Gudisan, a CCT Multipurpose Cooperative (Multipurpose Co-op) member. “Nevertheless, I am grateful to be a CCT partner. Thank you Lord for the blessing.”

Allan dela Cruz, a kaibigan construction worker in CCT Tagaytay Retreat and Training Center (TRTC),

was among those locked down in the center. Yet he felt strengthened by the worship, fellowship, and productive activities in TRTC. During one of the discipleship sessions, he affirmed how the Word of God delivered him from the power of darkness to a new life filled with hope.

Among the many lives blessed was Nanay Imelda Ramada, a CCT Community Fellowship Inc., (CFI) member from Parañaque, “We have been allowed to operate our own sari-sari (variety) store for a limited period of time, but we chose to serve Him first through the relief initiatives. I am grateful to CCT for allowing me and my husband to serve our co-members in CCT who need help at this time of crisis.”

Another inspiring testimony is that of Nanay Lorna Daliwan’s, a COVID-19 survivor. Nanay Lorna is a Multipurpose Co-op member and health worker in Dagupan. Despite having symptoms like colds and loss of appetite, she continued to go to work. After several check-ups, Nanay Lorna decided to be admitted to the hospital, without any family members to avoid any contraction. After she tested positive from COVID-19, she felt helpless and hopeless. In spite of her situation, Nanay Lorna remained strong in the Lord and her faith has kept her still. She trusted that Christ is Lord over her condition. True enough, one’s faith, though small as a mustard seed, can

move mountains. Through constant prayers, Nanay Lorna gradually recovered. Provisions and restoration came along. Even after getting out of the hospital, Nanay Lorna's story has touched people's lives around her. And this miracle has kept Nanay Lorna grounded on the Word of the Lord. This is surely an image of Jesus' words in Matthew 9:22, "your faith has made you well."

These stories are just some of the many lives who have attested that Christ reigns over a crisis brought about by a pandemic. Indeed, this is a time to be thankful to our sovereign God Who works all things for His glory.

By His grace, CCT was able to be a channel of blessing to the most vulnerable and needy communities at this most difficult time.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

-Philippians 4:6-7



"Some of our partners in Parañaque are running on a tight budget. They were also afraid to go out of their houses because they have no quarantine passes. They are thankful for the relief supplies they received from CCT, and for the staff who personally delivered them despite the travel restriction. Now, they already have something to put on their table."

- Arlie Malicse, Team Servant, CCT Parañaque

"We are doing this for the Lord. We have been also allowed to operate our own sari-sari store for a limited period of time, but we chose to serve Him first. I am grateful to CCT for allowing me and my husband to serve our co-members in CCT who need help at this time of crisis."

- Nanay Imelda Ramada, Multipurpose Co-op and CFI member, CCT Parañaque



"Our members have not received yet any assistance. Thank you to CCT. They are always ready to help those in need, particularly in times like this."

- Nanay Elsa Reloj, CSL Chairperson, CCT Muntinlupa

"No one is buying from my store. Limiting the operating hours of businesses has really affected my profit. I already can't afford our household needs. Nevertheless, I am grateful to be a CCT partner. Thank you Lord for the blessing."

- Nanay Amparo Gudisan, Multipurpose Co-op member, CCT Parañaque



Remembering the Tribes during Crisis

As the most vulnerable sector in society, the tribal communities are at risk of suffering from the devastating effects of COVID-19. They are more susceptible to the virus due to lower immunity and lack of access to information and health services; and with restrictions in mobility and travel, they cannot sell their crops or find work to sustain their families. If not because of the virus, it is most likely that hunger will lead to their demise.

Withstanding the challenges, CCT continues to journey with the tribal communities and remembers them in this time of great need.

Initiated by the SOCCSKSARGEN Regional Council Chairperson Bro. Jan Ced, Multipurpose Co-op staff, and CSLs distributed food packages to 25 families of the Badjao tribal community in Sitio Kulasi, Brgy. Labangal, General Santos City. Recipients of the relief were families of partners who actively joined CCT's community fellowship and savings program despite having little to no regular income. With the quarantine aggravating their already meager resources, they are very thankful for the help they received from CCT.

CCT also reached out to another Badjao tribal community in Palawan. CCT's work in the community started in 2015 with five partners who are part of the savings program. From them, the cluster expanded

and formed a bayanihan group of 15 adults and 12 youth. Through this group, CCT was able to share the Gospel to the whole community, and conducted regular Bible study sessions and activities for the children. When the community quarantine began, CCT staff continued to reach out to the community on their own and pooled their own money to buy groceries to share with them. Knowing the difficulties during quarantine, the chieftain was deeply moved by the unexpected act of kindness that the staff showed to his community.

In partnership with OneChild, CCT also reached out to 54 families of Palaw'an children studying in CCT-Visions of Hope Christian School in Quezon, Palawan. Aside from giving them food packages, the school took the opportunity of checking up on their health status and providing them free medicines and face masks, so they can comply with the requirements of the government on safety protocols. Since they have not been receiving assistance from the government due to the distance of their homes from the town proper, they were really thankful for CCT's efforts to reach out and help them.

As one of the partners shared, CCT did not only share God's love to them through His Word, but showed them how God loves them through action. Truly, it is through these acts of love that God's love shines the most.





Worship with social distancing continues at the Lupang Pangako.

A Promise Fulfilled in Lupang Pangako: The Kaibigan Village Model during Lockdown

A month after the government enforced lockdown, disturbing news about the poor pleading for food and relief supplies in the streets spread like wildfire. "How can we survive?"—this has been the question that troubles millions of Filipinos since the series of community quarantine that started in March. This is true especially for the poor sector whose plight includes not only fearing the highly infectious COVID-19 virus, but also the threat of unemployment and starvation. Worries on their daily survival have piled up even up to this writing.

Such is the case in many urban and rural areas in the island of Luzon. But in CCT's Lupang Pangako, also known as the Kaibigan Village (KV), the situation was miraculously different.

Located in the largest city of Nueva Ecija, this 32-hectare of non-contiguous land proved to be

a thriving community in Cabanatuan City. Once a barren land, Lupang Pangako has been a home to former street dwellers (kaibigans) whose lives were transformed by the radical love of God. Within the three-month lockdown, not a single kaibigan experienced hunger. Instead, the entire community witnessed bountiful provisions from the Lord. "God has never forsaken us. There was no hunger. No one got sick, not even a fever. All of us here are safe, including our families. God has done a lot of things here," said one of the resident staff.

Aside from the 6.9 hectares of land dedicated for agriculture and animal husbandry, all households were encouraged to do gardening in their backyards. This signified the Balik sa Lupa campaign of CCT, tilling the land and making it productive. From the very beginning, each resident knew the benefits of growing a garden through the F.A.I.T.H (Food Always

in the Home) program. Because of this practice, the community reaped plentiful harvests of vegetables like string beans, tomatoes, lady's fingers, eggplant, squash, and chili peppers. Kilos of meat were provided too.

Another notable thing was the "community sharing" within Lupang Pangako. Despite the cost-cutting in terms of their allowances, kaibigans added all their money and shared their meals with one another. They also generously split food reliefs that they received from local government units. What a heartwarming manifestation of Acts 4:32!

The bayanihan spirit has also been evident. Many kaibigans happily participated in volunteer works as well. Some served as security guards in the residential area while others built its fence and gate. One kaibigan shared the reason behind his willingness, "Before, I was helpless and was guided by CCT to get back on my feet. Now it is time to pay them back!"

Construction works were put on hold and kaibigan workers were no longer given salaries, but by the grace of God, they lacked nothing. Canned goods bought in preparation for the lockdown were left untouched. God's provisions were so abundant that the community even managed to bless 200 families in Quezon City as they shared their crops with them. Up until the first week of June, they still have a lot to harvest yet. Indeed, God is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all that one can ask for or think.

Overflowing blessings in a generous and selfless community of the once hopeless—this is the move of God—fulfilling His promises. The secret? Abiding in God and in His Word. Bible studies in small groups continued; families were praying without ceasing; even children of kaibigans gathered at dawn to worship. This faith community in Lupang Pangako remains unshaken amid these trying times because they hold on to a God Who is immovable.



With their livestock and crops, the kaibigan community in KV was able to provide food not only for their families, but for their neighbors as well.



Community servant leaders sorting the donated clothes for the affected families of the Taal Volcano eruption

Paglingap for the Long Term

Filipinos have become resilient with the annual typhoons that hit the country.

Nevertheless, the Taal Volcano eruption and the COVID-19 pandemic put a halt to the Filipinos' normal way of living. No one was prepared for the massive loss of jobs and businesses. The ministry's operations were also severely affected. While having its own challenges, how can CCT carry on with its ministry work? Despite this, CCT responded to the leading of the Holy Spirit in reaching out to the affected communities.

CCT was reminded that there is no one-size-fits-all approach in ministry or development work. At some point, there will always be a paradigm shift. In times like these, the Lord only asks of what you can offer, what you are willing to sacrifice. And so with the faithfulness in the little that it has and obedience to God's call of helping the needy, God has blessed the CCT Paglingap program.

Fear and doubts may manifest because of the uncertainties brought about by the ongoing pandemic. But with faith and obedience to God's call of joining His work of transformation, courage follows. And with it, the nobility of the Filipino spirit and the heroism of its race arises, all by the grace of God.

In this journey toward the "new normal", one thing is certain—paglingap remains. Paglingap for the long term will involve the entire CCT communities. CCT enjoins like-minded individuals, institutions, churches, and organizations in this work of transformation, especially during the most difficult seasons.

"May He equip you with all you need for doing His will. May He produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to Him.

All glory to Him forever and ever! Amen."

-Hebrews 13:21

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!
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