

No Relief Yet

By Cheryl Baldicantos

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KANANGA, LEYTE – Six days after Typhoon Yolanda ravaged large parts of Visayas, the people's shout for food grow louder. The government says they are doing their best but there are simply too many affected and too little resources for them to infiltrate all the areas.

"I didn't know if I could find something for us here. But I still went. We never got any relief goods since the typhoon came. It is very hard for me, for us. Very hard indeed," sixty-six-year-old Lydia Mahait says.

Due to scarcity of food after the typhoon, people from far-flung mountainous areas have come down to cities in hopes of getting food or any relief.

Lydia has travelled from her place in Calubian to Kananga yesterday just to get some gasoline for their lamp at night. She has been standing in line and waiting for the gasoline station to open since around 6am yesterday.

"It is always so dark. Our house was destroyed by the typhoon. We don't have a kitchen, we don't have anything," Lydia says as she holds a small container with her hand.

It took her three hours to get to Kananga—a town around 2 hours from Ormoc City. Their entire province has been badly damaged by super typhoon Yolanda.

Because almost all vital resources have been damaged, the prices of gasoline and food had blown out of proportion. A liter of gasoline costs five times the normal price or more.

"I hope they won't do politics in the giving of relief goods," Dojie Guinto, a resident of Poblacion, Kananga adds as he too stands in line.

He says he got some relief goods for the first time yesterday. It contained 2 packs of noodles, 2 cans of sardines and 2 kilos of rice. He shares that their town councilor distributed it.

“They only gave the voters. Those who couldn’t vote like my American handicapped neighbor was not given anything. We are all victims. Why would they do that?” Guinto adds as he shifts on his other foot.

He shares that the Americans airdropped some relief goods yesterday. But the problem is that they have to be very fast to be able to get some. According to Guinto, they just airdropped around 15 sacks of rice in their area.

Rosadilla Romero, another resident of Kananga, asks why the relief goods aren’t delivered by a truck.

“The roads are passable and we are very accessible. We understand airdropping of food in the mountains. But they should just use trucks to get here so that it will all be distributed fairly,” Rosadilla adds as she tries to adjust the towel on her head to shield her from the sun.

From what used to be a province adorned with trees, not much shade could be had now. The typhoon downed most of the large trees especially the shady acacias that lined the road.

Help from non-government organizations and other countries have started to trickle in. However, thousands of survivors still have to be reached. A kilo of rice and some canned goods cannot last for a week for an individual, let alone a common family of five.

In nearby areas like Tacloban City, the dead still continue to litter the streets.