

Crossing Waters to Bring Life and Hope

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea. Psalm 46:1-2

Typhoon Odette, that caused immense destruction in the region of the Visayas in the Philippines during the night of December 18, 2021, continues to be an important focus of our ministries into 2022. While the more accessible urban communities have been restored to normality, many communities isolated from the main water source and power lines have remained unattended. Furthermore, the aftermath of a major natural disaster that displaced more than 11 thousand families and led to the death of 74 people, will have lasting traumatic effects on the emotions of the people.

The Youth Advocates Through Theater Arts (YATTA) of which Dessa is the Director and the Silliman Water Ministry, where Cobbie is very involved, have been active in many of these isolated communities.

One such community is an isolated island off the coastline of Bais City, Negros Oriental, about 60 miles north of Dumaguete. The small island's name is Olympia Island, and it hosts a population of about 200 families or 1200 individuals. There are no vehicles on the island, the residents walk to the local market and school. The residents are mostly earning their living as fisherfolk and fish dryers with a reputation of producing a delicious dried fish called "danggit", which they catch from their small outrigger boats.

Life was simple and peaceful until the night of December 18, when the island took the initial landfall of typhoon Odette from the sea. It was devastating, damaging homes, water lines and power lines and destroying about 90% of their fishing boats.



Olympia Island in the distance hit hard by typhoon Odette

YATTA members had heard about the devastation and sent a team to assess the situation. There was clearly trauma among the young people who were staying in the evacuation center on the island as they waited for help and their homes to be reconstructed. YATTA came back with a determination to find the needed resources to return to the island with a combined program of relief goods and an arts-based psycho-social activity for kids and youth ages 4-17 years old.

The YATTA event on the island of Olympia took place on April 2, 2022. There were 8 facilitators, and they were able to involve more than sixty children and youth as participants. The response was positive, and the community was appreciative as they saw the young people being creative and celebrating again.

A few of the sixty plus children who participated in the arts-based psycho-social support activity held in Olympia Island last April 2, 2022.



It was at this time that YATTA realized that the potable water in the community was not healthy. During their psycho-social workshop they were provided bottled water from the mainland. After an inquiry about the water, it was realized that the clean drinking water had not yet been restored and the children were getting sick from the water.



Crossing the waters to Olympia Island with a SolarPure water purifier

This information was passed on to Silliman Water Ministry and an investigation of the water situation began. The investigation resulted in the need to offer a SolarPure from Silliman Water Ministry.

A SolarPure is a solar powered mobile water purifier created by Silliman Water that can be transported to different communities to clean their water source.

A SolarPure was prepared and the journey began to transport a SolarPure to the island of Olympia on April 5.

The trip was challenged by having to load the SolarPure on their small outrigger boat to cross from the mainland to the island. With care and cooperation, the SolarPure was helped on to the island. It was



Moving the SolarPure off the boat onto the Olympia Island

rolled on the island paths and brought to the location of the water source close to the center of the community.

The Silliman Water team mounted it successfully to the water source and through the filters and ultraviolet light the water would pass ensuring the community would now have clean water.

The community expressed their gratitude exclaiming that because of the water situation, bottled water vendors from the mainland had been abusing the situation by charging a high price beyond their capacity to

afford on a regular basis. As a community leader said, "this will be a blessing in this time of trouble."

We are mindful each day that our work is connected to your support and prayers. We can weather these storms and provide healing, blessing and new life to communities in need because you are there standing with us.

Thank you for your commitment to our ministries.

Cobbie and Dessa Palm
Philippines
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Clean water on Olympia Island