

A Year Later, Philippine Typhoon Survivors Still Need Help

Cities and lives devastated a year ago have yet to be rebuilt

Months after the strongest typhoon to hit land killed his mother and tore down much of their house in the eastern Philippines, Immanuel Cruz (not his real name) wants to return home — if only he can scrape together the money to rebuild his life once he gets there. Like the hundreds of thousands of others, the 38-year-old farmer fled the destruction wrought by Typhoon Haiyan to Manila, the capital. But after a fruitless search for work and surviving on the charity of his relatives, Immanuel says it is now time to go back to his village, where his father lives in what remains of their house — a tarpaulin roof strung between two broken walls. He feels a duty to return home and a year later there is almost nothing to go home to.



A year after the devastating Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines, hundreds of thousands of Filipinos are just like Immanuel, struggling to start a new life with few options but to beg and live on handouts. It is estimated that the typhoon totally damaged over a million houses and displaced over 4 million people, with hundreds of thousands still residing in bunkhouses or temporary shelters. Against this backdrop, people are struggling with business start-ups, finding jobs and looking for small amounts of capital to start a new business or re-build an old one.

The economy is as much in shambles as the houses they used to live in. With few jobs and no savings, feeding one's family is as much as many can manage. Rebuilding homes and starting a small business are just dreams. [**But You Can Help**](#) this dream become a reality. A small amount of money is all that's needed to buy chickens to sell eggs, buy tools for a carpenter to rebuild homes, purchase canned goods and snacks to start a little *sari-sari* store, or buy materials to build a small fishing boat.

Motivated by this dire need, a group of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) from Wisconsin, in partnership with the Wisconsin Microfinance (a program run by a UW-Madison student) and with outreach support from the RPCVs of Madison, has launched a microfinance lending program. This program is designed to make small loans to people unable to get credit from traditional lenders. Microfinance is the *key* to helping Filipinos to get started on a new life. While the wealthiest areas have begun to rebuild, the poorest have no resources to do so. [**Please give to this program and help change lives.**](#) We are working with a vibrant network of cooperatives called VICTO.

Said Kate Schachter, member of the RPCVs of Wisconsin-Madison and Board Emeritus of the National Peace Corps Association: "As Peace Corps Volunteers who served throughout the world, we saw what the difference small loans could make in a person's life in communities existing primarily on survival skills. Men and women were empowered, families fed, children continued school, the village held firm."

Together with VICTO, efforts will initially target one village. That village is Loay, on the island of Bohol located in the central part of the Philippines. Loay suffered severely not just from the typhoon but weeks earlier from a powerful 7.2-magnitude earthquake. VICTO will manage the program that will focus on women in entrepreneurial enterprises. Low interest loans will range in amounts of \$500 to \$1000. We hope to have a lasting positive impact in this one village and in the future expand to others. You can make your contributions at the following website. <http://wisconsinmicrofinance.com/philippines/>