

Written by Bobby M. Reyes

Monday, 17 January 2011 16:12 - Last Updated Monday, 17 January 2011 16:53

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The Filipino People Must Address the Real Causes of Floods, Landslides and Other Calamities as Disaster Aid Is Merely a Band-aid Solution

*{xtypo\_quote} But here, alas, my lonely little river, How old and barren you have become!  
New-sprung rocks have deformed your sinews, Unruly brown grasses have covered you. Your  
beauty and usefulness they have shunned ...* –Filipino-American Poet Maya  
Teague *{/xtypo\_quote}*

The recent floods and landslides in the Philippines – as reported by Elena L. Aben and Gabriel S. Mabutas of the *Manila Bulletin* – will again prompt some Overseas-Filipino community leaders to start a fundraising drive supposedly to aid the calamity victims. The *Manila Bulletin* news report is reproduced at the end of this article.

But many Overseas Filipinos will not heed the call to charitable arms. Many Filipinos nowadays just give to their immediate kin in the Philippines and very little in donation to non-government organizations (NGO) engaged in disaster relief. And they will not give at all to Philippine-government agencies.

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In the first place, many Overseas Filipinos have been saying that the primary cause of landslides and floods is the destruction of the country's forests and watershed areas by illegal logging. Since very few land parcels have been distributed to them through land reform, some farmers contribute further to the destruction of the environment by engaging in slash-and-burn (*kaingin* system) agricultural practices.

Thus, Filipino-American poet Maya Teague of Ventura County in Southern California wrote about a typical river in the Philippines in her poem, "[RIVULET \(A Poem by Maya Teague\)](#)".

Ms. Maya and I share the knowledge with many pundits that rivers in the Philippines become mere brooks or "silent springs" during the dry season. When the rains come, the torrents of water cascading from bald mountaintops turn the rivulets into angry rivers that flood lowlands and cause lots of damages to farms and residential areas, if not death and injuries. Tropical typhoons just magnify the natural calamities that occur annually in the Philippine homeland. And this tragic "comedia" repeats itself nearly every year. The people and their leaders never learn from history.

This writer described the wanton obliteration of forests and even the destruction of watershed areas in Sorsogon Province in this article,

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[The Filipino "Silent Springs" \(With Apologies to Rachel Carson\)](#)

Charo Nabong-Cabardo wrote about the same rape of the environment in [Plundering the Forests of Samar Island and the Philippines](#)

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I wrote further about the sad state of Sorsogon's environment in,

[Illegal Logging Causes Landslides and Lahar Flow in Bulusan Volcano](#) .

**The Filipino People Can Blame Themselves and their Politicians**

As many Overseas-Filipino writers have said,

[Perhaps Filipino Voters Deserve their Cruel, If Not Merciless, Fate](#)

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As run in the “Unsolicited Advice” column, this writer said:

[How Some Overseas-Filipino Organizations Are “Reinventing” Disaster Relief](#) and

Ka Hector Santos, the cofounder of the Philippine History Group of Los Angeles, wrote this piece of practical advice:

[Reinventing Overseas-Filipino Donations for Philippine-Disaster Victims](#)

Washington, DC-based writer Ado Paglinawan wrote about the “blame game” in so far as who was to be blamed for the “Ondoy” tragedy in this article,

[A People Caught in Its Own Dung \(Part II\)](#)

## Many Overseas Filipinos Now Refuse to Contribute to Any Philippine Disaster-relief Fundraiser - Mabuhay

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One does not have to be a rocket scientist to know as to whom to blame for the casualties during calamities. Here is my take:

[The “Bahay Kubo” Mentality and Government Neglect, If Not Stupidity and Cluelessness, Are to Blame for Storm-caused Deaths and Destruction](#)

And more . . . [Tropical Storm Ketsana Is a Wake-up Call for Filipino Political Leaders and Voters to Deal with Global Warming](#)

Even then-Senator Nene Pimentel wrote that [PGMA Asked to Report How She Spent Multibillion Pesos in Calamity and Social Funds](#)

Mr. Paglinawan went further and said, “ [Metro Manila Chairman Killed Flood-warning System](#) .”

Our group of writers did not only write news reports but also suggestions on how to prepare the country for disasters and calamities. We sent proposals as described in these articles:

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[Gloria Arroyo Misses a Golden Opportunity to Create a World-class Legacy of Leadership in Disaster Relief by Operating Hospital Ships](#)

[OFWs Won't Object If LEOs Will Arrest GMA and Her Minions for Criminal Misconduct Before, During and After the Disasters](#)

We even turned to the Bible and said: “ [Can We Attribute the Homeland's Desolation, Destitution, Chaos, Filth, Stench, Etc., Etc., to the Filipinos' Lack of Spirituality?](#)”

—

We offered to organize year-round efforts to help calamity victims by doing this advocacy: [Food for Thought: Putting Meaning to Manny Villar's Orange Campaign Color](#). But then nobody listened to us and even acknowledged our proposal.

And we fear that the Philippines faces a bigger and deadlier disaster. So, we re-published this warning, [RP Government Must Be Warned Again of](#)

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[Impending Catastrophic Earthquakes that Will Surely Hit the Philippines](#)

, and still nobody among the Filipino decision-and/or-policy makers listens.

Here is the *Manila Bulletin* article:

### **1.4 million displaced by floods, slides**

DoST prepares to install landslide early-warning devices

By Elena L. Aben And Gabriel S. Mabutas

***Manila Bulletin***

January 15, 2011, 8:49pm

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M ANILA, Philippines — Massive flooding and a series of landslides caused by continuous heavy rains in Southern Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao have displaced close to 1.4 million people and killed at least 47, while damage to infrastructure and agriculture has reached P1.5 billion, disaster officials reported on Saturday.

Based on the latest National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) bulletin, 268,079 families or 1,388,830 people in 25 provinces in Regions 4-B, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11,12, Caraga, and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) are now adversely affected by the continuous rains that started last Dec. 29.

Among the 10 affected regions, Caraga (Northeast Mindanao) had the biggest number of displaced persons with 112,096 families or 601,804 people, followed by Region VIII with 66,437 families or 338,469 people. Region 5, the Bicol area, is third with 43,868 families or 223,548 people.

As this developed, Department of Science and Technology (DoST) Secretary Mario Montejo and Undersecretary Graciano Yumul, officer-in-charge of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) led a team of experts in inspecting and determining where to install the country's first ever landslide warning device.

"We are actually inspecting areas in the province that are most susceptible to landslide, to determine where to install our landslide early warning device," Montejo told Manila Bulletin during the DoST inspection.

He said they are prioritizing the installation of the devices nationwide to keep the country from becoming another Brazil where at least 550 persons were killed in a mudslide.

As of 6 a.m. Saturday, the NDRRMC also said the number of deaths due to the floods and landslides has increased to 47, with more fatalities reported in the Bicol region and the Visayas identified as Ricky Villar, 28, of Barangay Payo, Panganiban, Catanduanes; Armando Mallete, 51, of Barangay Amomonting, Castilla, Sorsogon (drowning); Chen Te Hao, 37, Sitio Benguet, Himagtocon, Camarines Sur (landslide); Amelyn Logronio, 9, of Purok Isla, Barangay Villamonte, Bacolod City, Negros Occidental (drowning); and Jose Anonas, 37, of Barangay San Jose, EB Magalona, Negros Occidental.

Four persons remained missing, identified as Ronnie Jupson, 19, of Bunawan, Agusan del Sur; Bartolome Rabonque, 57, of Esperanza, Agusan del Sur; and fishermen Patricio Peregrino and Joseph Soledad of Panganiban, Catanduanes.

Of the total number of adversely affected population, 3,733 families or 18,099 people are still in 80 evacuation centers.

The NDRRMC report signed by its executive director, Benito Ramos, estimated damage to agriculture, infrastructure, and private properties at P1,552,005,494, broken down as follows:

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agriculture, P417,715,140; infrastructure, P1,083,732,418; and private properties, P20,996,300.

Troops from the 8th Infantry Division (8ID) continue helping victims of floods and landslides in region 8 by delivering relief goods amid heavy rains to families trapped in various areas in Region 8.

Helicopters of the Philippine Air Force (PAF) are being used in bringing trapped families to safer ground.

### **DoST inspection**

The DoST conducted an inspection in the municipality of Saint Bernard in coordination with Mayor Rico Rentuza who has placed his locality in heightened alert due to the rains that brought in a volume of water almost double the usual.

Mario Peñaranda, officer-in-charge of PAGASA Tacloban, said that although the month of December and January are always rainy, the volume of rain that poured in the first two weeks of January registered at 511.5 in their rain gauge.

“Yung inulan ngayon for the month of January, masyadong excessive. Nung January 1, nakaregister kami ng 126.4 mm for January 1 only. Tapos yung dito nga, na monitor ko more than 200 mm per day sila. Pero aside from that, nung January 12, yun ang highest namin so far from January 1 to January 12, 176 mm ‘yon.

And the total normal value for Tacloban for the month of January is only 288 mm. So far, *ang nare-record naming ulan* is 511.5 so almost double na ang normal value niya for the month of January,” he said.

Yumul said that with a supersaturated soil, landslides are most expected to occur in mountainous areas in Saint Bernard. Montejo said they might complete installing their landslide early warning device by June.

By installing landslide early warning device, the DoST chief said they expect to reduce the number of casualties and save more properties whenever landslides occur.

The DoST-developed device, according to Montejo, is a tube-like device measuring a minimum length of 20 meters, with a sensor in each meter. It is installed vertically below the ground until it touches the bedrock. # # #