

October 6, 2011

## **IMPLEMENTATION MESSAGE**

By: Celia Pangilinan-Donahue

Hello from Kuala Lumpur this time. Am in between meetings so am taking the time to write this before all these become stale news.

What a week it has been over in rainy and typhoon-ravaged Manila. First and foremost, we had a great implementation in Baseco, Tondo as Lottie reported. The guys from the CFO (Commission on Filipinos Overseas) were really troupers, young new ones on staff, very enthusiastic, still idealistic, always smiling, and all excited for us to be back and do more stuff with us.

There were so MANY people, very well organized, a few in tears because they did not get tickets for the relief goods. I noticed so many pregnant women (we need that RH bill passed!), old people, kids looking so frail, so many mothers cradling little babies, some breast feeding while they wait, many looking bewildered because their shanties got blown away. I looked out into a sea of people and really felt like crying because in our midst was a sea of really poor people looking out to us like we went there to save them.

Lottie handed me the microphone during the presentation and was almost at a loss at how to inspire them to never give up; how to elicit a smile; how to bring hope that their lots can improve; how to tell them there will come better days. I spoke to the kids and told them to stay in school and do their schoolwork the best they can, and that education will be their ticket out to better homes, to better lives. I went around the mothers and listened to their stories about being abandoned to take care of many very young children, of going to relatives to ask for clothes because everything they had was swept away by the storm, of having old parents so sick and frail to take care of, of not having eaten, children oh so thin and frail, older siblings taking care of the little ones like good shepherds, of being so fearful of tomorrow because they do not know where to go or where to bed down the children even that night, and the nights thereafter. So many lives in misery, so many people so poor and yet they eagerly smiled as we spoke, and how they laughed and watched a young boy and a girl went impromptu to the stage and started dancing like they were performing for television.

The decision to reach out was a great one. During the post Diaspora to Development Summit press interview, Sec. Mely Nicolas singled Feed the Hungry, Inc. out as CFO's most responsive partner with the biggest and widest reach in helping out the poor. She spoke of the lightning speed we were coming with, as we laid out an implementation plan for emergency relief work less than 12 hours after Typhoon *Pedring* left the country. She inspired her staff to give a little bit more after two grueling weeks of prepping for the summit and the busy heady three days of the Summit. And CFO delivered so admirably, and all so professionally managed.

I saw Senator Drilon during the welcome reception for the Diaspora Summit. I thanked him again for his 100 classrooms commitment, and he wants to remind us again that his 100 should be matched by new 100 from our end, and not the 100 we have already built in the past. I also spent sometime with Gretchen. In one of our conversations, she noted that she hopes we can come up with a good project for the Metrobank grant. I did not say anything because I felt Lottie should inform her officially about our plan for the grant money. Had dinner with the Del Rosario family night before I left for KL and ADR sends his best to "his favorite NGO" he says.

Reporting from Manila dear friends, and missing my boys and everyone.

Best to all!