

S'pore Catholics assist flood victims



Ms Ligna Ku (far left) from Singapore's acts29 mission group, seen here with members of acts29 in the Philippines, on their way to distribute aid to flood evacuees housed in an elementary school.

Members of Catholic missionary groups in Singapore have been doing their bit to help flood victims in the Philippines.

Ms Sherlyn Kong from acts29, together with a few other volunteers, and Ms Audrey Leong from ACTS (A Call to Share) were in Manila to help provide much needed food rations and other material aid to affected communities.

Both groups are affiliate organisations of CHARIS.

Ms Leong brought with her 120 water filters provided by CHARIS. Half were distributed to 1,200 displaced people under the care of the FMA (Don Bosco) nuns in Santa Mesa, while the other half was given to the ICPE (Institute for World Evangelisation) community in Montalban.

Another Singaporean, Ms Esther Fong, who has been stationed in the Philippines for several years, brought the desperately needed filters to remote rural communities in Kasiglahan and Rizal where over 300 families did not have drinking water.

Meanwhile, Ms Khong headed to Payatas in Quezon City, a community which acts29 has been helping for the last seven years.

Together with local acts29 members, food rations were distributed to more than 800 victims

in Rodriguez Rizal. Ms Khong also identified the urgent basic need for food, drinking water, medicine and kitchen utensils, as well as school kits so children can return to school.

"It is important for students to resume school as it works towards getting back to normalcy," she said. "This is crucial because youngsters are the ones most affected ... by the disasters."

According to Mr Frederick Foo, CHARIS' operations director: "The floods in Manila may be a precursor of more natural calamities to come ... We must reach out to our sisters and brothers in the region who are in need of our help."

Meanwhile, the Church in the Philippines has swung into action.

The National Secretariat of Social Action, Justice and Peace of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has released 850,000 pesos (S\$25,220) for affected dioceses, reported CBCP News, the bishops' conference's news website.

Many churches in Metro Manila have also been converted into evacuation centres, reported ucanews.com.

Caritas Manila has also distributed thousands of hygiene kits with toothbrushes, soap and other necessities, as well as bags of food to displaced communities. □