Bohol earthquake survivors face uphill struggle to recover three months on  IFRC  21 January 2014 10:57 CET

Flordeliza and Ricolano Logo are attempting to re-establish their livelihoods through making and selling bread from the tent provided by the Red Cross. Cheryl Gagalac/IFRC

By Afrhill Rances, in Bohol  Phillipines

Three months on since the deadly 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck Bohol, an island in the Central Visayas region of the Philippines, Flordeliza, and her family struggle to fit inside a small makeshift tent in Buenavista municipality. The continuous rains that welcomed 2014 make matters worse. She and her eight children do not have a place to go when the water leaks into their small tent, which they created with two tarpaulins received from the Red Cross.

Flordeliza and her husband Ricolano have struggled to get back on their feet since the disaster. The family home was destroyed by the earthquake, now only the foundations remain. “Every day when I wake up and before I go to sleep, I wonder if we could ever go back to the normal life we used to have where we had a decent roof over our heads,” says Flordeliza.

The only source of income for the family is a small bread business, which Flordeliza runs from their tent. On a good day she is lucky if she gets Php100 (around 2 US dollars). Most people in her community face similar difficulties and they lack the purchasing power to obtain even the most essential items due to the disruption of their livelihoods caused by the earthquake.

As well as killing at least 220 people and injuring a thousand, the quake damaged some 76,200 houses in the worst-affected province of Bohol – totally destroying around 11,400. Although some people have started to repair or rebuild using salvaged materials, almost 4,000 families are still sleeping under canvas and 3,000 people remain housed in temporary evacuation centres established by the government.

“People still need relief supplies, water and health services but we also need to assist those who need to repair and rebuild their homes,” says Richard Gordon, chairman of Philippine Red Cross.
Since the earthquake, the Philippine Red Cross, with the support of International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has provided at least 10,000 families with essential household items including blankets, water containers, personal hygiene items, mosquito nets and tarpaulins.

On 26 December 2013, the IFRC issued a revised emergency appeal seeking 7.7 million Swiss francs (USD 8.5 million, 6.2 million Euros) to enable the Philippine Red Cross to assist 20,000 families for 16 months. Almost half of the budget is allocated to helping people repair or rebuild their homes. However, the response to the appeal has been slow, with contributions only reaching 2.1 million Swiss francs (USD 2.3 million, Euros 1.7 million). This means that the Red Cross is currently only able to meet the shelter needs of 1,200 families.

“We are confronted with the challenge where the media and donors seem to have forgotten that there are still massive needs amongst earthquake survivors in Bohol,” says Gordon. “We implore our partners to help us remain true to our commitment of being there for those in need, even when the world no longer watches.”

In the meantime, the conditions may not be best for now but Flordeliza is thankful to have at least something to protect her family from the elements. Through the support of donors, she hopes the family can rebuild their home and have a decent roof over their heads.