

## Church Applies Welfare Principles in Philippines Recovery

**M**onths after Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines in November 2013, destroying nearly 1.2 million homes and killing more than 6,200 people, the Church continues to provide relief, shifting efforts from disaster response to longer-term relief. One particularly successful effort involves volunteers who have learned to build homes for those still without shelter.

The following community members affected by the storm are among many who expressed gratitude for help they received from the Church, even though they are not Latter-day Saints:

- A woman who took refuge in a Mormon chapel during the typhoon found out afterward that her home had been destroyed when coconut trees fell on it. She and her family did not have the means to fix it, but volunteers helped her to build a new house, and she is now helping another family to construct a home. “I learned to work together with those who are also in need here, so we can recover from [the typhoon] together,” she said.
- A man who lost his job when the business where he worked was destroyed is now learning to build homes for his family and others.



**Volunteers nail plywood to the frame of a new house in Tacloban, Philippines.**

“We know we need to help one another so that work can be completed quicker,” he said, adding that he is grateful for the Church’s relief efforts.

Presiding Bishop Gary E. Stevenson said that, along with caring for the poor and needy, “we are also seeing the principle of self-reliance in action right now, and it’s rather astounding.” He said, “One of the things that we’re trying to do is provide materials while [recipients] provide labor. Anyone who is receiving a shelter is also working to build that shelter themselves.”

Local Church leaders and humanitarian representatives are meeting with local community leaders to give vocational training and certification to people who have learned carpentry skills. Perpetual Education Fund resources have been used to bring in 20 master carpenters to assist with training, and 2,000 of 3,000 projected houses have already been completed.

Local trainees demonstrate their learning by building 10 shelters to receive government certification and a toolbox from the Church, enabling them to seek gainful employment. There is such an acute need for construction workers that Catholic Relief

Services has agreed to hire hundreds of carpenters trained by the LDS Church.

Bishop Stevenson said that 500 members of the Church attended a meeting where ecclesiastical leaders described the job training and certification, “and as this was described to them, they broke out in applause and tears, knowing that they could see a pathway . . . to provide for their families.”

The Church has also worked with several other charitable organizations as well as the Philippine government in a continuing effort to deliver food, water, medical supplies, hygiene kits, generators, shelter kits, cooking kits, fishing gear, and seeds for planting.

The Church has learned that the most effective way to respond to disasters is to work locally, purchasing needed supplies in the affected country, as near to the disaster as possible. Not only does this ensure that the goods are appropriate for the area, but it also helps build up impaired local economies.

Members worldwide are encouraged to pray for those in disaster areas distant from where they live, and to consider increasing their fast-offering donations or donating to the Church humanitarian fund. ■