

Disaster Relief Work on Leyte by Shelsea Ramirez

This past summer I was fortunate enough to join All Hands Volunteers on the island of Leyte in the Philippines. I initially applied to join the organization in order to learn about the inner workings of non-governmental organizations working for disaster relief. I was drawn to All Hands specifically because of their outlook on volunteer work. The organization promotes volunteering for the sake of helping others. It is an organization founded by volunteers for volunteers. I thought it correlated well with the outlook of the Pacific Basin Research Center.

I arrived to Tacloban, the largest city on Leyte that was heavily affected by Super Typhoon Haiyan. We had several projects on Leyte. I was fortunate enough to see multiple projects expand and two projects completed. The organization promoted volunteer activism within the community and volunteers enthusiastically created their own projects. Through the volunteer-based projects I was able to connect with community members and understand the effects of the Super Typhoon to a new level. Because of the Pacific Basin Research Grant, I was able to have a memorable, eye-opening experience that connected me to a new community of people.

Through this experience I have learned that communities that are affected by natural disasters, such as the citizens on Leyte, desire essentials. They want to regain the home they lost. Some want to share their stories and simply need a listening ear. They want to recuperate their livelihood. The community responded well to the work we accomplished. They were glad that people were there helping them remove the rubble and rebuild their lives. We worked alongside Filipinos and always had their input on the work we did. I was able to gain knowledge on rebuilding communities, both in a physical sense and in a figurative sense and I thank the Pacific Basin Research Center for giving me that opportunity.



Project Tagpuro—86 transitional houses were completed and families were being moved in upon my departure