



The Philippine American Life and General Insurance Company

15F - 18F Philam Life Head Office
Net Lima Building, 5th Avenue cor. 26th Street
Bonifacio Global City, Taguig 1634
Philippines
T: (632) 521 6300 / (632) 526 9200
E: philamlife@aia.com
W: philamlife.com

Customer Hotline: (632) 528 2000

MEDIA RELEASE

New *Philam Paaralan* classrooms will benefit more than 1,200 students in Yolanda-hit areas

Manila, Philippines (February 11, 2014)—Philam Life’s corporate social responsibility arm Philam Foundation, Inc., through *Philam Paaralan*, is set to build up to 23 classrooms that will benefit over 1,200 students in Yolanda-hit areas.

According to Max Ventura, Philam Foundation Executive Director, building and rebuilding classrooms in the wake of a calamity is always a priority because “people want to get back on their feet and this helps bring things back to normal.” “It helps the morale of the people in the community and it brings a message of hope,” he said.

As part of *Tabang Visayas*, a coalition of civil society organizations in support of rehabilitation for Yolanda victims, Philam Foundation works closely with the Department of Education (DepEd) to ensure that the selection of sites is aligned with government allocation plans, and that all classrooms built follow upgraded standards.

Super typhoon Yolanda, which devastated Central Visayas in November last year, affected 2,210 schools in four regions. DepEd Undersecretary Mario Deriquito noted that there are approximately 3,000 totally damaged schools which need to be replaced, in addition to 13,000 schools damaged in varying degrees.

The ongoing rehabilitation process for the damaged schools is expected to be finished in time for the school year opening in June 2014 while new classroom construction will continue until the last quarter of the year. In the meantime, affected students will have to take their classes in makeshift classrooms.

Deriquito added that prioritizing classroom rehabilitation is important so children can “resume their normal lives.”

Healthy Education

Each *Philam Paaralan* is composed of two classrooms which, combined, can benefit at least 100 students. The classrooms come complete with chairs, blackboards, fans, lighting equipment, and even their own toilet.

As part of its vision to give beneficiaries a “healthy education”, Philam Foundation also integrates the WASH—Water Sanitation and Hygiene—program in each *Philam Paaralan*. Under this program, children



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are trained to learn about oral hygiene and proper sanitation habits. They also undergo semi-annual de-worming sessions.

Ventura explained, “We learned that one of the top reasons why elementary students drop out is health issues. For instance, when a student has a toothache and misses a few days of class, he tends to lose interest in coming back and trying to catch up on the missed lessons. With WASH, we teach kids proper hygiene to prevent health-related fallouts.”

The foundation chief noted *Philam Paaralan*’s “catalyzing” effect on the community. “The good thing about the program is it becomes a means to engage the community. We talk to everybody—PTA, LGU, *barangay*—because they have to own it,” he said. “It’s a rallying point especially soon after a calamity.”

Complete, sturdier package

Philam Paaralan classrooms are built using an “unconventional method” using steel frame technology.

“We had it evaluated and it was certified to be structurally sound, and 10 times stronger than conventional hollow blocks, based on compression study,” Ventura said. “Given what happened during Yolanda, we asked our supplier to revisit the design and see where we can put reinforcements especially in the roofing so it can withstand 230 kilometers per hour winds.”

For his part, DepEd’s Deriquito cited *Philam Paaralan* for providing a “complete package.” “For us, it’s a very generous gift from Philam Foundation which has always been a valuable partner for DepEd. Overall, the private sector has proven to be a very important source of support for this rehabilitation process.”

Philam Paaralan, established in 2012 during Philam Life’s 65th anniversary, aims to build 65 two-classroom buildings in five years. It focuses specifically on calamity-stricken and underserved regions. With the additional funding for Yolanda-hit areas, Ventura is confident that the foundation is on track to meet its goals.

The initial batch of *Philam Paaralan* recipients includes the following elementary schools: Loon, Santa Fe, Medellin, Pastrana, Manalili, San Jose and Marasbaras. PFI will also allocate resources to damaged schools in Negros and Panay Island. According to Ventura, construction for the first batch of schools will commence this February, with target completion date set before the start of the new school year.

“We will continue to build classrooms, whether there is a calamity or not,” he said. “Education continues to be a major issue in the Philippines. It needs all the help it can get and *Philam Paaralan* is here to support that cause.”

For more information about *Philam Paaralan*, log on to www.philamlife.com.

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About Philam Life

The Philippine American Life and General Insurance Company (Philam Life) is the country's premier life insurance company. Established on June 21, 1947, Philam Life offers an extensive line of products in the industry that provides solutions to various financial needs including life protection, health insurance, savings, education, retirement, investment, group and credit life insurance.

Philam Life is a member of AIA Group Limited, the largest independent publicly listed pan-Asian life insurance group.

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AIA meets the savings and protection needs of individuals by offering a range of products and services including retirement savings plans, life insurance and accident and health insurance. The Group also provides employee benefits, credit life and pension services to corporate clients. Through an extensive network of agents and employees across Asia-Pacific, AIA serves the holders of more than 27 million individual policies and over 16 million participating members of group insurance schemes.

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Media Contact:

Aissa Marie D. Ang

Head of Corporate Communications and PR
Philam Life
Tel no. +63(2) 521 6300 loc. 2665
Mobile no. +63(917) 5650173
Email: Aissa-D.Ang@aia.com

Ma. Monique G. Castro

Corporate Public Relations Officer
Philam Life
Tel no. +63(2) 521 6300 loc. 2659
Mobile no. +63(917) 6417024
Email: MaMonique-G.Castro@aia.com

Millet D. Liberato

Media Relations Director
DDB PR
Tel no. +63(2) 856 7888 loc.701
Mobile no. +63(939) 9041226
Email: mdliberato@ddbphil.com

Gene Paulo H. Bautista

Media Relations Manager
DDB PR
Tel no. +63(2) 856 7888 loc. 128
Mobile no. +63(998) 9761418
Email: ghbautista@ddbphil.com