



# Together, We Can !



**On the December 17th 2011 tropical storm Washi hit Iligan in the South of the Philippines, with devastating effect. We pay homage to the young people of the Hear Us! Program, who saved lives that day!**

**Editorial, by Jean-Marc Delaporte, Director LP4Y, The Philippines**

December 16th 2011. After working all week at the Life Project Center in Iligan on the island of Mindanao the young people of the Hear Us! program returned home. It wasn't long before the storm hit the town, cutting off power. The night was black as ink, and fast-flowing rivers of mud caught up debris and fallen tree trunks, sweeping away everything in their path. The night was to be a long one. Extremely long.

The sun rose the next day on a scene of desolation. In the days that followed the number of people dead or missing rose to 100, and then kept rising.

The figures today speak of 1,500 dead or missing, with 750,000 other affected in some way, including 50,000 made homeless.

**All the young people of Hear Us! are alive!**

As you will read in the following pages some of them saved lives. We would like to pay homage to them here, and make the commitment – with your support – to help them become the entrepreneurs that Iligan needs so badly.

Now, more than ever let us support the young people of Life Project for Youth!



**A nightmare to behold!**

Desolation as far as the eye can see bears witness to the violence of the storm that terrible night.

**A nightmare to experience!**

The usual lush vegetation, reminiscent of Eden, has been swept away. But the people remain. Those who live here in poverty but with dignity are trying to survive in this desolate landscape.

**A hope!**

That of the extraordinary resilience of human nature, so long as help and support are forthcoming.

Life Project 4 Youth already has a presence in Iligan, right where this drama unfolded, and that has made it possible for us to come immediately to the aid of the young people in the Hear Us! program, and their families.

That's what they need most. I saw this firsthand.

*Jean-Marc Demeure  
President LP4Y Belgium*





## Tonton. What happened that night?

"I woke suddenly at about 1 in the morning when I became aware of the ceiling just above my head.  
My bed was floating!  
I know how to swim, so I took a deep breath and dived down to open the door of the room where I was sleeping.  
It was very hard because of the force of the mud and water.  
Then I had to get through a second door in order to get out of the house.  
Once I was out I climbed into a mango tree for safety.  
All around me people were struggling to get to safety.  
I helped 2 children who couldn't swim.  
I took them on my back and put them in the mango tree.  
The water didn't start to go down until about 5 am.  
There was mud everywhere, and it was awful to see everything destroyed, and then to find the bodies of those who had drowned."



Tonton, 19, explains to the Hear Us! team how he managed to save 2 children

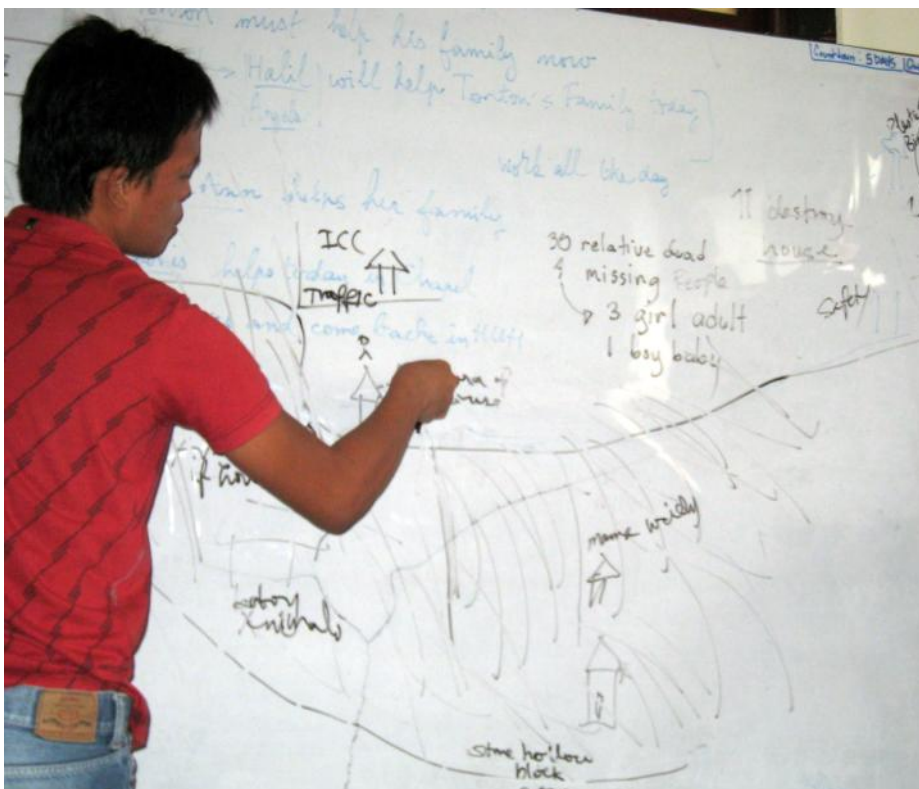
### Recount, illustrate, pray, recount again ...

After the terrible week of the floods our first priority was to make sure that all the young people were safe. Thank God, they were! But the overall assessment was bad. Three of the young people had seen their houses and neighborhoods completely destroyed. They lost absolutely everything. Three others experienced flooding up to the 2nd floor. Their houses withstood the storm, but many of their belongings were destroyed or swept away. Cleaning up the mud is a long and difficult task. Four of the young people lost close members of their families – a brother, a cousin,

and uncle, aunt or nephew – swept away or drowned by the sudden rising of the waters. The survivors are traumatized by what they have seen and lived through. Our number one task is to help them express what they experienced and felt. It is always important to be able to share traumatizing experiences, but for these young deaf people who cannot communicate with the hearing people who surround them, the need to share with their own community is primordial. We therefore made available the necessary time for them to express, illustrate, sign what they felt

during and after the catastrophe. We also had some powerful moments of prayer when all, Christian and Muslim, were able to express their pain and fear, their joy at being still alive, their personal plans and hopes for the future. Looking at the state of the affected neighborhoods today it's clear that reconstruction will take months, if not years. The damage is worst in Iligan, a town of 200,000 which has lost nearly 1,500 inhabitants. Every family has been touched in some way. The psychological rebuilding will take as long and will require assistance. The community of the young deaf people of the Hear us! house can play an important role in helping their families to get through this, despite the tough times. We will do what we can to help them.

Colombe de Vachon  
Coordinator for Life Project 4 Youth in Iligan



### Mastura's story

"My brother died in the floods ...  
We have lost almost everything we own.  
Our equipment is broken – refrigerator, TV, gas cooker.  
It's a really tough time.  
It's important for us to be able to talk about what happened; what we are suffering and the problems we have.  
My parents don't speak sign language, so I go to my friends in the deaf community to talk about what I saw and how I feel."

Photo left: Mastura, 20, calculates the damage. 30 people he knew have died or disappeared

## Hear Us! House: Emergency center

### Julie-Anne's story

"Lots of my family members lived in the Hinaplannon neighborhood which was destroyed by the floods. After our house was destroyed we spent a night with one of my aunts who lives in a different part of Iligan.

Then we were very happy to go to the Hear Us! House as there were so many of us at my aunt's that we couldn't all lie down to sleep.

Fifteen of us, including 4 children, spent 8 nights at the Hear us! house. We were able to sleep properly and so have the energy to work on cleaning up the mud and trying to retrieve some of our belongings.

Two days after the flood my father found his motorbike, and was able to repair it. This is really good news as he needs his motorbike for work.

Since Christmas my family has been sleeping in the church in our neighborhood while we wait to build a new house. But that will take time.

I was the first in the Life Project Center to sleep in the Hear us! house, but 10 of my friends have since joined me there.



Julie-Anne and her family in front of what remains of their house

Together we organize our communal life.

I help Richie to manage the cooking, and I've been elected Vice Captain to work with Captain Adonis on improving all aspects of our communal life."



Above, Bridget Horan (in white). Bridget is American and an LP4Y volunteer, in charge of buildings.

### Bridget's Projects

I first arrived in Iligan City in September, with the mission to renovate a large house for use as a home and training center for the Hear Us community, thanks to an endowment from Air France Foundation. For the last four months I have been working with a contractor and the young people themselves to repair, remodel, and repaint the house and garden. The biggest privilege of my assignment has been getting to know these young people – learning sign language, teaching construction skills, and watching them develop in the way they work and relate within the community. The flood hit Iligan just as the main portion of the work was being completed, so we were able to welcome Julie Anne's family to a secure home with running water and electricity. And now, only 2 weeks after the event, many of the lots in the affected area have already had small structures rebuilt, and small loads of plywood and building supplies continue to arrive on tricycles and motorbikes. The will of the people to rebuild their lives and their homes is very powerful, and I hope that at least in the case of the Hear Us families I can help them to do this in the coming months.



Inputting at MSU IIT (Mindanao State University, Iligan Institute of Technology)



Aymeric and Tonton



Sharing experiences in the Hear Us! house hall

### At the center: Carrying on with the encoding business

We are very lucky in that the Hear Us! House is in a neighborhood far from the rivers. The house was spared by the floods, and so we have not had to go through what thousands of Iligan families have, namely, spending days cleaning out the water and mud that have got in everywhere.

Nonetheless our timetable has been seriously disrupted in recent days, as our main priority was to allow the young people to express and share their experiences. But fairly quickly we were able to get back to the data inputting, so essential to the future of the center. A first potential client is currently training us to work on real cases. The young people take the work very seriously and improve their performance each day as they work towards their goal of becoming professional and reliable employees. I am sure that professional success will play a large part in helping the young people cope with the trauma they have experienced. We will do all we can to help them!

Aymeric de Vachon, Coach and head of new projects in the Life Project Center Iligan





In the Life Project Center the young people from Hear Us! discover the first messages of support. To date they have received nearly 100 messages, from Europe, the US, India, the Philippines ...

**Let's embark together!**

LP4Y now has offices in France, Belgium, Luxemburg, the US, and the Philippines. You can join LP4Y teams in each of these countries!

Here's how to get involved with young victims of extreme exclusion:

Become a MEMBER and receive the latest updates, as well as invitations to events and meetings and the general assemblies. Annual membership in France, Belgium and Luxemburg is 10€ for 2012. Or you can become a member in the Philippines or in the US when you make your first donation.

Become a SPONSOR by making regular or one-off donations to help create a fund base for LP4Y. You can also make gifts in kind.

Become a PARTNER through regular or one-off contributions to the program of your choice. You will be invited to attend the meetings of the orientation committee for that program, which occur 3 times a year.

Become a CORRESPONDANT, sharing information about LP4Y with your contacts, and assisting in the organisation of information and communication events. If LP4Y is not already present in your country of residence you can even help set up a new branch!

Become a VOLUNTEER, at any age (17-77) on a temporary or permanent basis. You can be active in Europe, the USA or Asia. Your training and social security, insurance, pension etc will be taken care of through provisions of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Don't hold back! Join LP4Y today!**

Email us at [info@lp4y.org](mailto:info@lp4y.org)

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**Thank you for your messages and your donations.**

Following Jean-Marc's email of December 21, informing the friends of LP4Y of the effects of typhoon Washi on the young people from the Hear Us! program, many of you sent messages of support. These messages, illustrated emails, power points, children's pictures, photos, had a profound effect on the young deaf people at Hear Us! You cannot imagine their joy on receiving these messages of friendship and solidarity.

**"We hear you!"**

It was incredibly important for them to read, explain and examine these messages as a group, and then, in turn, take them home to show to their families and friends, before finally fixing them on the wall in the new Hear Us! house which they've only recently moved into.

Another wonderful surprise; many expats and volunteers from other NGOs attended the Christmas Mass celebrated in the French Catholic pa-

rish in Manila. Father Bernard and Father Gilles dedicated the mass to the poor, and in particular to the young deaf people from Hear Us! in Iligan. The collection that day went to those whose houses had been swept away or submerged by the mud flows. And since then we have received yet more donations, from Europe, the US and the Philippines, totaling 2,250 Euros.

The volunteers and young people from Hear Us! are working together to see how best they can help those most in need and work towards a better future.

Thank you all for your support.

Laure Delaporte,  
President LP4Y Foundation Inc. Philippines

