

Extension - Flood through the window

What it was like to be there: the Manila flood in the Philippines, 26th September 2009, through the eyes of Mike Cano, an Earth science teacher

I thank God I am still alive. My house in Manila was flooded up to the second floor. All of my things are now wet and muddy. It pains me to see books, family photos, documents, even Earth science educational materials all lying in the mud.

I stayed in the third floor of our neighbour's house. I slept with 40+ others in a 12 sq. metre floor area, so I had to sleep sitting up (notwithstanding the foul smell in the room!). I was very worried because it rained so hard and continuously that I thought at some point even the third floor would be flooded and then we were doomed! I watched everything going on outside through very small openings of the semi-closed window. The Pasig River was just a few meters from our place and I could see different structures, appliances, etc. flowing swiftly along in the river. I was able to take photos from the window, but they are not so good since it was raining and I had to do it fast so that the rain wouldn't enter the 3rd floor.

We were never rescued. It seems the local government was not prepared for a flood disaster of this magnitude. All I saw were roofs and wet people like myself hoping to be rescued at one point. I prayed hard and even asked my wife and several others to pray and then the rain weakened into drizzle before it got really dark (we had no electricity then – and still don't have any).

This morning, with a heavy heart I picked up my (very dear) books from the muddy floor as they were scattered in my room and threw them out. Presents I bought from Taiwan for my wife, son and friends all perished.

Aside from my books, it is the sentimental value of the things I lost in the flood that pains me, not so much their monetary value. But, believe it or not, I am still joyful - joyful that I'm still alive and that I will be able to see my wife (who is 5-months pregnant) and son soon. There is more reason to be happy than sad!

This experience has further galvanized my commitment to the Filipino youth - commitment to educate the next generation in understanding how the Earth with its subsystems works. With climate change becoming more evident each passing day, we really have to put our act together.

Miguel Cano.



People of Los Baños in the Laguna de Bay area, south of Manila, were affected in the aftermath of Typhoon Ketsana. 29th September 2009.

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An account published on the internet at: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Typhoon_Ketsana_accumulated_rainfall_in_Philippines.jpg, read:

On September 26, 2009, Tropical Storm Ketsana dropped a month's worth of rain in a matter of hours on the Philippine capital of Manila. Streets resembled rivers, covered by water that was chest high and still rising, according to news reports. Over the next few days, death tolls climbed from dozens to over 200, with more casualties expected as search and rescue efforts continued. As of September 28, more than 100,000 people had taken refuge in evacuation centers, and more than 330,000 were believed to be affected.

The flooding that struck the region in late September 2009 was the worst in more than 40 years. Officials declared a "state of calamity" in Manila and 25 provinces affected by the storm.