

By **ABBY REBONG**

International pop sensation Justin Bieber reached out to Philam Life for a special fundraising drive benefitting those affected by Typhoon Haiyan. It's not everyday that you get to meet an international pop icon, so just imagine the shocked faces of the people of Tacloban when one day, they were able to talk to, shake hands with, and be serenaded by Justin Bieber.



Photos by **ROBYN PENN** of Maui Maki Photography



Justin Bieber turns over Philam Life's donation of US\$500,000 to Philam Foundation Executive Director Max Ventura and DepEd Usec Mario Deriquito. Photo by **Eric Venus**

Using the power of social media to do good

Justin ended his international concert tour with a visit to the people of Tacloban. This came after he put up the #GiveBackPhilippines fundraising campaign through Prizeo.com. The campaign is also in partnership with AIA - The Real Life Company and TV5. In the Philippines, Philam Life and BPI-Philam are members of AIA. "This is the most touching trip of my life," he shares. The visit was kept confidential so Justin will be able to properly go around Tacloban and meet stakeholders for the #GiveBackPhilippines campaign.

"When I first heard about the massive scale of the Typhoon Haiyan disaster that had struck the Philippines, I knew I wanted to help in any way I could," said Justin. "My fans are like family to me, so it made sense to bring everyone together to create something in the form of this major fundraising effort. This campaign is very close to my heart, and I'm confident that with the support of my fans and partners, we'll be able to raise enough to make a significant impact to truly make a difference."

For specific dollar donations, anyone from around the world was able to make contributions for the rehabilitation efforts in Central Visayas while also scoring cool treats from Justin. From a thank you video, digitally signed poster, campaign t-shirt, bracelet to various other gifts, Justin has shown,

especially the younger generation how easy it really is to share one's blessings with those in need.

And for one lucky Belieber, Justin has something even more special in store.

One lucky donor and a friend will win the best prize of all - the chance to fly in from anywhere in the world to hang out with Justin in his studio in LA, to watch him record new music, all-expenses paid!

But more than just prizes, the core of #GiveBackPhilippines lies in the three groups that Justin has chosen to partner with - Philam Foundation, Action Against Hunger, and UNICEF.



Justin Bieber plays basketball with Tacloban kids during his visit.

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Targeting specific rehabilitation goals in various cities in Central Visayas, these three groups are immensely grateful for Justin's effort.

Philam Paaralan

For Philam Foundation, the partnership couldn't have come at a better time as Philam Life's CSR arm is now preparing the logistics for the biggest project that its long-running Philam Paaralan program has taken on since it was conceptualized.

"The Philam Paaralan program was conceived during our 65th anniversary celebration. At that time, I think there was a big gap in the classroom shortages in the public education system and Philam Life felt that that's where we can help and put up the Philam Paaralan program," shares Max Ventura, Executive Director of Philam Foundation, Inc.

Philam Life, a company who's always had a good relationship with the Department of Education and with products offering education benefits, felt that such a project will be a good fit for their CSR goals.

For Philam Paaralan, Philam Foundation has committed to put up 65 classrooms in a span of five years, and Max is happy to report that they're



Justin was warmly greeted by fans upon his arrival in Tacloban City last Dec. 10. Photo by **MOSES VILLANOY**.



Justin greets kids in City Central School and San Jose Elementary School. Photo by **MOSES VILLANOY**

currently on their 23rd classroom. These classrooms are spread out in different municipalities nationwide, particularly in typhoon and earthquake stricken areas. Max is proud to share that they have worked hard in finding a good system for their classroom building project wherein building time is much shorter and the structures are 10x stronger.

More than 3,000 schools were damaged by Typhoon Yolanda. Kids are deprived of their basic right to education as a result "We believe that kids going back to school is a clear sign of normalcy, of people starting to rebuild their lives," explains Max.

Through their current partnership with #GiveBackPhilippines, Philam Life has also contributed greatly to the cause, donating US\$500,000 to Philam Foundation, which of course, will soon become fully furnished classrooms that will prove to be of good use to the municipalities devastated by Typhoon Yolanda. This amount would also

increase once #GiveBackPhilippines turns over the donations that it has generated online. According to Isca Abaya, Head of Philam Life Marketing, one classroom costs P1million. Philam Paaralan classrooms are special because these also have bathrooms and washing facilities installed. "We want to give students a conducive venue for studying," says Isca. Philam Paaralan also wants to instill the habit of good hygiene to young children. Philam Paaralan's tagline is "Give kids a healthy education". Isca is optimistic that they will be able to build more than 20 classrooms in Central Visayas in 2014.

More than just a CSR effort, this special project of Philam Paaralan proudly showcases the strength of the human spirit - both in its resiliency in overcoming real life challenges and struggles and the generosity of real life heroes to extend help to others.

For more information visit www.philamlife.com.



High school students in Isabela take their class photo in front of their Philam Paaralan, one of the classrooms built in 2011.



Typhoon Yolanda damaged over 3,000 schools in Central Visayas, causing kids to miss school and not get quality education. Photos by **ALDO BANAYNAL**



Classes resume in one of the elementary schools in Central Visayas despite damages caused by Typhoon Yolanda. Photo by **ALDO BANAYNAL**.