

**SAVE A TAHANAN, INC.**

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**WE NEED YOUR HELP**

Your Contribution Will Make a DIFFERENCE

Be a Donor of SAVE A TAHANAN, INC. (STI) and help provide opportunities for our underprivileged *kababayans*

- \$ 100.00 will sponsor a family with 5 to 6 children
- \$ 50.00 will start up loan for a mother or father with 1 or 2 children
- \$ 20.00 will help with other family development cost

Any amount will help.

Please make your check payable to *Save A Tahanan, Inc.*  
**Your donation is tax-deductible.**

*Save A Tahanan, Inc. (STI) is a tax exempt, 510(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization founded in 1986 by a group of Filipino-Americans based in San Francisco, California, a group of seven families originally from Calabanga, Camarines Sur.*

*Its mission is to mobilize resources to improve the lives of families through training and micro-financing and to empower them as responsible members of the community.*

*Its vision is to promote self-sufficient and stable families, leading communities to develop opportunities and collective solutions to issues of poverty, and upholding respect for all people of economic levels. STI believes that a self-sufficient tahanan (home) is the foundation of a strong society. It is guided by the principles of sharing and participation that instills accountability.*

*STI works in close partnership with its target beneficiaries, community leaders, and other stakeholders to implement its various programs in the project areas.*

## Going Back to Basics

by Frederick Esteves

With the effects of global warming being felt all over the world, STI sponsored farmers in Donsol, Sorsogon are doing their share to save Mother Earth by practicing sustainable agricultural methods. They are putting into practice what they had learned from the values formation seminars given by Mr. Santiago and STMI volunteers. These seminars made them aware that life systems on earth run in cycles and that their actions can either make a pleasing or disastrous difference. Mr. Santiago and company emphasized that chemical pollutants disrupt the natural cycle of life, poisoning our land, air, and waterways.

These seminars, along with the pressing decline in harvest, made them aware that their land is in the alarming stage. As evaluated by a team of soil experts from the Department of Agriculture, the top

soil is slowly losing its life, it is easily eroded. They need to do something fast before there will not be enough topsoil to grow the food.

The farmers were given pointers on how to restore health to the soil. They were taught methods and techniques such as

composting and use of natural fertilizers and use of natural pest control methods to leach toxicity from the land while rebuilding fertility to the soil.

The work involved is more tedious than spraying pesticides readily available at any store but the end result of going organic will give them better quality produce and healthier soil.

Consumers in Donsol are also addressing the problem by purchasing locally grown organic foods. By doing so, the cycle of sustainable agriculture is maintained.

Little by little, 'new hope' arises in Donsol as they feed new life into the soil. Going back to the basics will place them in better relationship with the Earth. °



November 29, 2006, Donsol, Sorsogon: Board Chair Marisa Robles (center) with STM Donsol Board Members E. Barrera and P. Toca.

Save A Tahanan, Inc.

# Tahanan News

Volume 5, Issue 1

June 2007



Tahanan News is the bi-annual newsletter of Save A Tahanan, Inc.

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## 2006: Another Remarkable Year

Dear Friends,

We are very happy to inform you that 2006 was another remarkable year for Save-a-Tahanan, Inc. (STI). We were able to meet our fundraising quota and made a very good impression to the community.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner-Dance was an evening where STI pioneers danced the night away with old and new friends. The celebration was an all-seat taken affair and was made special by the presence of Consul-General Maria Rowena Mendoza-Sanchez, who gave a very inspiring remarks. Certificates of appreciation were also given to our valuable advocates as tribute to their unwavering support.

For the third time, golf enthusiasts and staunch STI supporters converged at the Sunol Golf and Country Club to have fun and do

their share of nation building. This annual event that started in 2004 is a steady source of support for our projects in the Philippines.

One of our dear friends, Len dela Cruz, made STI her favorite charity organization during her birthday celebration as she asked her guests to make donations to STI instead of presents. Thank you, Len, for sharing our vision.

We receive donations every month and it is very moving to learn that some of our donors hear about STI by word of mouth. This shows that our accomplishments and integrity are our best public relations machinery. *Maraming salamat po.*

Looking back over two decades, Save-a-Tahanan, Inc., has been blessed with generous benefactors, efficient workforce, and com-

mitted beneficiaries. The inter-connection of lives towards a common goal resulted in the establishment of Gawad Kalinga/STM/LGU Village, providing decent shelter to needy families; the sustainability of the existing 11 chapters, assisting more than 1,000 families in maintaining steady sources of income and principal; the honors and accolades bestowed to us as testament on the quality of good work; and the creation of avenues towards fulfilling dreams.

Let us celebrate another exceptional year of offering hope and comfort to our underserved *kababayans*. Millions of thanks to your benevolence and please continue supporting us as our mission is far from being accomplished.

Sincerely,  
*Your STI Family*

## Bicol Relief Fund

by Roselli Tria

On November 30, 2006, while on one of their visits to STI Chapters in the provinces of Albay and Sorsogon, Honesto & Rosie Tria and Marisa Robles experienced first-hand the wrath of Typhoon Durian

(also known as Reming). They were left stranded in Tabaco, Albay for three days. Because the roads were impassable, their passage out of Tabaco was a boat ride to Legaspi City. From there, they boarded a

flight back to Manila, putting a premature end to their planned visits to other STI Chapters in the Bicol Region.

As with the rest of the residents of the Bicol region, many of STI's beneficiaries were devastated by this super typhoon, their

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## Bicol Relief Fund

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livelihoods wiped out. In order to help their beneficiaries back on their feet, STI chairperson Marisa Robles initiated the "Bicol Relief Fund" on December 2006. As of April 30, 2007, donors sent in \$2770.00 to this fund.

Relief and rehabilitation in the area continues and your contributions have helped rehabilitate the sources of

livelihood of a number of beneficiaries. So far, the following distributions have been made:

\$500.00 to the Goa Chapter  
\$500.00 to the Malinao Chapter  
\$500.00 to the Donsol Chapter  
\$1000.00 to the San Jose Chapter

Each beneficiary received PHP5000 (equivalent to \$100.00 USD) for the purpose of rehabilitating their business projects. We thank the generosity of

those who have donated for allowing us to help.

It takes time to rebuild a devastated town. STI hopes to be able to assist economic recovery of the area by helping individual families.

If you would like to contribute to this fund, please indicate "Bicol Relief Fund" in your check donation payable to "Save A Tahanan, Inc." ◻

## Traveling with Typhoon Durian (Reming)

by *Honesto Tria*

On November 29, 2007, our group started our visits to STI Chapters in the Bicol Region. Rosie and I were joined by Marisa Robles (STI Board Chairperson), Casilda Ramos (STM Philippines Consultant in the Bicol Region) and Ernesto Falcon (STM Volunteer).

We spent the first day of our working vacation meeting with the officers and beneficiaries of STM Donsol, Sorsogon. We distributed chocolates and used clothing to STM beneficiaries. We stayed the whole day and everything went well. Marisa is from Donsol and this was her first time back after 40 years. So it was a welcome sight visiting her relatives whom she had not seen for so long.

At around 4:00 pm, we left for Tabaco, Albay, where we checked in at the Gardenia Hotel. That evening, the typhoon started at around 8:00 pm. When we woke up the next morning, we saw the damage caused by the fury of typhoon Durian (Reming in the Phil). We saw rooftops and billboards blown by strong winds, uprooted trees, fallen electric posts, broken electric and telephone wires, and other debris blocking the streets. Torrential rains caused mudflows/mudslides burying houses and people. Most of the roads became impassable because they were blocked by huge rocks and mud mudslides from Mayon Volcano.

After checking out of the hotel, we proceeded to the home of the chairman of STI Tabaco. When we got to our destination, the wind and rain got so strong that we had to stop at the side of the road and could not leave the van. While waiting for the typhoon to pass, a piece of galvanized iron, that was part of a roof, hit our van. Thank God, no one was hurt in our group. When the rains weakened, the waters rose so we decided to returned to the center of the town and park by the church, for it had a cleared area.

When the wind and rain stopped, we returned to the hotel and asked to stay the night. They didn't want us to check-in because the hotel suffered a lot of damage, but we explained that we didn't have a place to stay. We slept on dry beds, but that was all the comfort we had. The hotel had no electricity, no water, no food, and no phone service. The hallways were covered with broken glass and the floors were flooded. For our meals, we ate the snacks that we carried around. Thus we were stranded in Tabaco, Albay for three days. And we were disconnected from the outside world because even the cell phones were not working.

The next morning, we got on the van and drove towards Naga City. We didn't get far because the bridge was out. Following someone's advise, we

went to Santo Domingo where we rented a banca (boat), and sailed to Legaspi City. There, we were able to get on a flight to Manila. We were not able to visit other STM projects in Albay and in Camarines Sur, which Marisa Robles, our Board Chair, wanted to visit. She wanted to witness first-hand how STM is working in the barrios/barangay.

In Legaspi City, we were able to see Mayon Volcano after the storm. It was so beautiful from a distance, with tall trees down, coconut trees "kalbo" (no leaves), clear sky, no clouds covering its top, it looked so serene and majestic.

Two days before we left for San Francisco, another strong typhoon (Seniang) hit the Philippines. Although the typhoon's path was through Samar and the nearby areas, it also affected the Metro Manila area, causing flooding of some streets. The same typhoon also passed through Albay, so more mudslides. More mud covered Cagsawa Ruins that what is left of the belfry above the ground is a little more than one meter.

At the Gawad Kalinga project in Calabanga, Camarines Sur, where STI donated the 4 ½ hectares of land, the roofs of over 100 homes, out of the 210 houses built, were blown by the strong winds of typhoon Durian. ◻

## Blooming Livelihood

by Frederick Esteves

Since losing her husband, Salome Alfonso was the sole breadwinner of her family. She worked as a housemaid in Manila, which separated her from her growing children. "It's so hard to be away from your loved ones but I cannot think of any other means to support them." She entrusted her children to a relative, who turned out maltreating them. A tragedy involving her youngest son made her decide to return home and to raise her children. "I told myself, I could find a new job in the province and be with my children at the same time." She worked as a sales

assistant in a grocery store but it did not augment their daily expenses and she was still away from her children the whole day. She needed to think of another way to support her four children.

Through a neighbor, Salome joined the STI orientation seminar in their community. Sensing a better future, she pursued the course and eventually was given a game plan based on her capabilities and existing resources. Having a good size backyard, She was encouraged to partake in the *Likod-*

*Bahay Kaunlaran* or Backyard Technology for Development program offered by STI.

The first months were hard for Salome. With the encouragement of her STM peers, she persevered and she discovered sweet success in growing *Sampaguita*. Even before harvest season, she was able to find a regular buyer for her sampaguita, which never failed to bear flowers everyday. The fruits of her labor bore a steady income and kept her closer to her children. ◻



Organic Farm in Oas, Albay



December 2, 2006, Tabaco, Albay: Aftermath of Typhoon Reming on town center. Stalls wiped out.

January 13, 2007, Barangay Junop: Four weavers to receive PHP 5000



January 10, 2007, Barangay Dila-Dila, Pampanga: Formation of new group for VALUES AND LIVELIHOOD Program