



OXFAM

Oxfam in the Philippines

'We are not afraid to drink our water!'

what one community thinks about Lifesaver jerry cans
Story & photos by Jane Beesley/Oxfam



On 8th November 2013 Typhoon Haiyan stuck parts of the Philippines with winds around 195 mph and creating a tsunami like storm surge killing over 6,000 people, displacing over 4 million and destroying or damaging over one million houses. Today around 2,000 people are still missing, an estimated area the size of Portugal has been devastated and over 14 million people have been affected. Oxfam is working in three areas, Leyte, Eastern Samar and North Cebu, providing humanitarian assistance in water, sanitation, hygiene, livelihoods support and emergency shelter.

Oxfam, with support from UKAid, is distributing around 2,000 Lifesaver jerry cans as part of its response in Leyte. Lifesaver jerry cans can filter 10,000 to 20,000 litres (2,650 to 5,300 gallons) of water. One jerrycan can provide water for four people for over three years. It does not need chemicals as it uses carbon technology that filters out viruses and bacteria. The process of filtering takes around 20 seconds then 0.70 litres or around 1.5 pints can be drunk immediately



In Ada, Tanuan Municipality, Oxfam distributed Life saver jerrycans to ninety families. Ada was targeted as it didn't have access to safe water and had a history of typhoid and diarrhoea outbreaks.

Below is what a group of fifteen men and women told Oxfam.

'Everyone uses the lifesaver jerry can!' exclaimed the group when asked who used them, emphasising that everyone in the family, men, women and children used it. 'We got the jerrycans the first week in December' reported Elsa Villamor, 'and we are still using them.'

Before Typhoon Haiyan the community either drank water from a communal deep well or from family owned dug wells. Then the typhoon damaged the deep well and destroyed the dug wells leaving the community with little access to water. Access to safe water was a problem in Ada before the typhoon with an outbreak of typhoid in February 2013 and frequent outbreaks of diarrhoea.

Sixteen homes didn't have latrines and open defecation was common and when Haiyan hit it damaged or destroyed most of the remaining latrines or CRs (Comfort Rooms) as they are known in the Philippines. The combination of unsafe water and a lack of latrines meant that after the typhoon diarrhoea was a very common problem.



'Before, after the typhoon struck the community, people immediately started suffering from diarrhoea.'

Says Francisco Villamor (above), 'Now two months later no-one here suffers from diarrhoea. No-one has had diarrhoea since we received the lifesavers.' Adding, 'Before when we got sick we had to spend a lot of money on medicines. Now there are no cases of sickness so the money is spent on repairing our houses.'

'We put water in the jerry can and screw the lid back on. There's a pump in the lid, which we pump up and down. Water is forced through the filter and we get safe drinking water which comes through a tap.' Ireno (right)



When asked what they liked about the Livesavers the group said, 'It's easy to purify water.'

Before it had been time-

consuming because they had to boil the water first, then let it cool and add chlorine. 'Now we can drink it directly from the jerrycan.' And, 'It tastes just



like mineral water!' A taste they definitely prefer to chlorine as they used to buy mineral water before when they could afford.

The dislikes were few. The main one was that the Lifesaver was heavy even before it contained water. They were quick to point out that this wasn't really a problem. They kept the Lifesaver at home and

collected water in other containers and then poured the water into the Lifesaver when they returned.

Everyone said their relatives and friends were very interested in it. Like Francisco's friend, he 'wanted to buy it because they hadn't received these in his area. He loved it!'



'We now have water security. We're not afraid to drink our water.'
Francisco (first on the left with the rest of the group in Ada)

Jane Beesley/Oxfam
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