

**SOLOMONS ISLANDS – TSUNAMI EMERGENCY –
DON BOSCO TECHNICAL INSTITUTE HENDERSON
SIMBO ISLAND- GIZO RELIEF TRIP
April 6, good Friday to April 8 Easter Sunday**

AN EXPERIENCE WORTH SHARING

26 students and 12 staff from Don Bosco Technical College have joined minds, hearts and hands in planning immediate relief action in favor of Simbo islands in the western Solomons badly hit by the Tsunami this Monday in the holy week, April 1. The reaction was triggered by our staff from Simbo Islands whose family and village was deeply affected and directly hit by the earthquake and the Tsunami. The SOS came in by two way radio last Tuesday April 3.

On the next day April 4, Wednesday, last day of class, after the washing each other's feet we felt we should do more for each other and together for the people of Simbo Islands in support to our staff member Mrs. Doris. We met as a council and decided to get involved in the immediate relief operations. Failing to see clear and immediate directions for immediate action at a national level, we decided to do it quickly and by ourselves.

On April 4 at 11:00 am we sent an SOS to Europe Don Bosco's Organizations asking for immediate support for a relief chartered ship trip to Simbo. In 24 hours the amount had been pledged for charting a ship and bringing the needed good. The school was ready to leave on Thursday April 5 but unfortunately no ship was available until Friday Morning. With us were the relieves gathered by the association of the relief workers from Ranonga and Nusa Simbo islands, Caritas organization joined with a good amount of relief goods.

We left on Friday at 12 noon and reached Simbo at 9:30 am

As we approached the Island one could see the parts where the tsunami coming from the western part. On the village of RIGURU the houses on high grounds have been safe, however those of the lower ground were totally swept away. As we turned around the island we could see many people on top of the hills greeting us with fire and smoke and waving at us. As we reached the last part of the island we caught sight of what used to be the Village of TAPURAI; the Village where the United Church bishop and others lost their lives and their homes. The church alone in high grounds was spared.

As we continued towards the eastern side of the Islands we sighted the majestic Ove volcano crater. Upon entering the LENGANA bay we saw the remains of what was the village of MASURU, totally swept away

To welcome us at the LENGANA Warf was the chairman of the relief committee of Simbo Island, Rev. Gideon Tuke, and the Lengana Chief Samson Gui with the leaders and representatives from all the island villages. Rev. Kere Manupio from Honiara came in with the ship with us. The newly inducted pastor Rev. Gideon Pina was with the welcome committee too.

We had a short encounter where we exchanged greetings, words of support and encouragement and prayerful songs. Not few tears were shed too, some of sorrow and solidarity and some of Joy too.

The welcome was very warm and heartening both to the residents and the visitors. These memories will be part of our personal patrimony and will there always when we need to go back to them for inspiration.

After an exchange of gifts (beautifully hand made mats western style) we started the unloading operations of the relief good which filled the ship to capacity. It took a good four long hours under the heat of the sun to unload the whole shipment of supplies by the hard working bosconians and the people of the Island. 500 20 Kg bags of Rice, 5000 liters of drinking waters in first class 15 liters containers to be reused, tarpaulins, treated mosquito nets, clothes. The Warf, underwater for an excessively high tide, re-emerged after a couple of hours of work, facilitating the unloading operations.

The work was interrupted briefly by the coming of the Governor General by Helicopter to show his solidarity to the Simbo people. Ranonga people and Nusa Simbo were also present to receive their goods.

More than 50 people came over to the ship to be transported to Gizo or Honiara for treatment or to join their loved ones.

What we have seen can better be commented and expressed by few pictures we include that by any word

We left the island of Simbo at 2:00 pm directed to Gizo where we reached at 4:00. Were we unloaded other relief goods for Gizo and Ranonga people. At 6:00 pm we sailed back to Honiara where we reached at 2:00 pm

The experience was overwhelming for all of us. Unexpectedly we were the first relief ship to reach Simbo Island, motivated by the urgent need to respond immediately to the tragedy of one of our teachers and her family. In our eagerness to let the goods reach on time, we preferred to bring the goods personally, we wanted to make contact with the people and let them know personally that we care for them, that they are not alone and that not all hope is lost, that God still loves them and more help is coming through the organized national bodies as well as private individuals as we hear in the daily news. The experienced deeply touched all Bosconians and staff members who are more than eager to join in any rehabilitation effort as soon as plans will be in place. 40 carpenter students and welders are available with their tools to cooperate in the reconstruction work.

The main feeling shared by those who had these two days and two night working exhausting experience was unanimous: we all feel happy for what we did, this Easter Experience has been a truly meaningful one. The tears and words of gratitude we received will forever be with us as part of our being to inspire us when we will need them.

For Don Bosco technical College
Fr Luciano Capelli, sdb
School Director