

'Miracle' baby born in Philippine typhoon rubble

November 11 2013, by Jason Gutierrez

Emily Sagalis cried tears of joy after giving birth to a "miracle" girl in a typhoon-ravaged Philippine city, then named the baby after her mother who went missing in the storm.

The girl was born Monday in a destroyed airport compound that was turned into a makeshift medical centre, with her bed a piece of dirty plywood resting amid dirt, broken glass, twisted metal, nails and other debris.

"She is so beautiful. I will name her Bea Joy in honour of my mother, Beatriz," Sagalis, 21, whispered shortly after giving birth.

Sagalis said her mother was swept away when giant waves generated by Super Typhoon Haiyan surged into their home near Tacloban city, the capital of Leyte province which was one of the worst-hit areas, and she has not been seen since.

More than 10,000 people are believed to have died in Leyte, and many hundreds on other islands across the central Philippines, which would make Haiyan the country's worst recorded natural disaster.

But, in the most tragic of circumstances, Bea Joy restarted the cycle of life.

"She is my miracle. I had thought I would die with her still inside me when high waves came and took us all away," she said, as her teary-eyed

husband, Jobert, clasped the baby and a volunteer held an IV drip above them.

The husband said the first wave that came carried their wooden home in the coastal town of San Jose many metres inland, washing all of the family outside.

He said the entire community had been washed away, with the once picturesque area replaced by rubble and the bloated remains of people and animals.

"We are supposed to be celebrating today, but we are also mourning our dead," Jobert said.

He said it was God's will that he found his wife floating amongst the debris.

They were carried away for what felt like hours until the water subsided, and they found themselves sheltering in a school building where other mud-soaked and injured survivors had huddled.

The couple and their surviving neighbours subsisted there until Monday morning only on bottles of water they found among the debris. Jobert said he knew that his wife was about to give birth any day, but no help or aid had come.

"She began labour at 5:00 am (Monday) so we had to walk several kilometres before a truck driver hitched us a ride," he said.

The young military doctor who attended to her, Captain Victoriano Sambale, said the new mother had already broken her waters by the time the couple stepped inside the building, and then developed bleeding during the delivery.

"This is the first time we have delivered a baby here. The baby is fine and we have managed to stop the bleeding of the mother," he said.

However, he cautioned doctors were extremely concerned about potential infections that could easily be caught amid the unsterile conditions, with the medical team almost powerless now to help her.

"Definitely the mother is still in danger from infection and sepsis (septicemia). So we need to give her intravenous antibiotics. Unfortunately we ran out of even the oral antibiotics yesterday," Sambale said.

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