Warrane students rebuild Longolongo hall and chapel

A group of university students from Warrane College in Sydney volunteered to help rebuild a community hall and Catholic chapel at Longolongo, Tonga.

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A group of university students from Warrane College, encouraged by Louise Waterhouse, Tonga's Honorary Consul in Sydney,

volunteered to help rebuild a community hall and Catholic chapel at Longolongo.

The Longolongo community hall and chapel were destroyed by Tropical Cyclone Gita last year.

The group of 22 people led by the Dean of Warrane College Arthur Escamilla arrived in Tonga on August 31 and spent two weeks working alongside a local builder and members of the local community.

"The guys worked hard and I've been impressed by their desire to "get their hands dirty" at the site. Some sessions have been physically quite demanding but I have not heard anyone complain," said Arthur.

There was also plenty of other activities each day including daily Mass, guided prayer given by the Warrane College chaplain and the

rosary. The group made time to visit other schools damaged by the cyclone, including the biggest Catholic school in the country which has 1400 students.

At one of the schools to 'break the ice' the Warrane boys asked the students to sing. They duly obliged and the boys were in awe of the beauty of the Tongan voices and songs.

One of the students on the trip, Dominic O'Brien, said the locals had been very welcoming and friendly.

The College has organized similar projects since the early 1980s and this is the fourth time they have travelled to Tonga and worked on similar projects.

The students paid their own trip and raised money to make a financial contribution for the reconstruction.

Warrane partnered with Reledev Australia Ltd, an Australian NGO and the Catholic Diocese of Tonga supported by HECardinal Mafi