

By SHEILA COVARRUBIAS

Two years and seven months after they were displaced by the September 2013 siege, 164 families returned to their permanent houses in Sta. Barbara and Sta. Catalina following formal turnover rites Saturday, April 2.

The 164 families are the latest batch of beneficiaries to the thousands of housing units up for construction under the Zamboanga City Roadmap to Recovery and Reconstruction (Z3R).

Mayor Beng Climaco who spearheaded the turnover of the housing units together with National Housing Authority officials headed by District Manager Engr. Al Indanan and City officials, called on the beneficiaries to take good care of the houses turned over to them and to take care of their community to prevent the 2013 siege from happening again.

Though the permanent houses came after a while, but the siege-affected families must remember that the government has not forgotten them. “Little by little [we are doing the best we can] pabor tiene esperanza, huwag tayong mawala ng pag-asa dahil habang may buhay may pag-asa,” the chief executive appealed.

Of the total number 153 are at the Christian-Muslim UPAI Subdivision in Sta. Barbara and are part of the total 259 units targeted for construction in the area with a total cost of P51.81 million. The remaining units are ongoing with May 2, 2016 as the target completion date. The 11 housing units are at the Lustre HOA Subdivision and form part of the total 154 units targeted for construction with a total cost of P39.20 million. The first 113 units were turned over to the beneficiaries last July 15.

Also present during the turnover were Assistant City Social Welfare and Development Officer Leonida Bayan, staff from the City Housing and Land Management Division and barangay officials led by Chairman Irin. — Sheila Covarrubias