

**EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR'S
KEY MESSAGES ON TYPHOON HAIYAN/YOLANDA
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I. Key Messages

1. The humanitarian situation in the areas devastated by Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) is catastrophic. An estimated 11.5 million people in the Philippines are affected, including four million children. Over half a million men, women and children are now homeless and living in the open, desperate for food, safe drinking water, basic shelter and sanitation. Many people have lost everything: their loved ones; their homes; their communities.
2. A disaster of this magnitude requires a massive response. The Government of the Philippines mobilized relief operations under extremely challenging circumstances. Local government has been decimated either because people have died or because they are searching for loved ones. Due to the scale, complexity and urgency of the situation the humanitarian community has declared the highest level of emergency response, meaning that supplies, logistical capacity and experienced humanitarian leaders have been deployed from around the world to support Government-led efforts.
3. The scale and scope of this tragedy has shocked everyone. Despite the evacuation of people before the typhoon hit and the presence of humanitarian teams on the ground, nobody anticipated the ferocity of the typhoon and the storm surge. People in the Philippines are resilient; they deal with numerous crises each year, but this situation was outside their experience.
4. The priorities for the next days and weeks are transporting and distributing more high energy biscuits and food, tarpaulins, tents and other shelter and essential items. Hygiene kits are needed particularly for children, water purification tablets, and a service to help families find each other. A major cash-for-work programme to clear routes needs to get underway and more body bags are needed. Trucks, motorcycles, generators, fuel and telecommunications equipment are needed to get life-saving supplies to the people who need them the most. It is an immense logistical challenge. The work being done by military personnel from partner countries to support the efforts of the Philippine military is an essential element of scaling up humanitarian operations. The arrival of additional aircraft, helicopters, communications equipment and other essential supplies is enabling us to reach more vulnerable people in remote locations every day.

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The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.

5. The United Nations and humanitarian partners are mounting a major aid operation throughout the affected area. Five medical teams are providing emergency services in Cebu and Tacloban, and food supplies for 170,000 people have been distributed in Tacloban City. A pipeline of relief supplies from Manila to the affected areas is starting to deliver. We have coordination and assessment teams in Busuanga, Roxas and Tacloban, and logistics staff are working in Cebu. Water services have been restored in some areas, and child protection specialists are working with the authorities to identify and register children separated from their families.

6. A humanitarian response plan has been launched, seeking US\$301 million for the United Nations and humanitarian partners to provide emergency food, shelter, clean water and sanitation and health services for six months. This will be updated as the situation evolves. US\$25 million has already been allocated by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to kick-start life-saving operations. All contributions, from countries, companies and private individuals will make a difference. Please give generously and show your commitment to the people and Government of the Philippines as they cope with this shocking tragedy.

II. Internal Guidance

If asked only

Q. What are the priorities for the humanitarian response?

There is devastation on an unprecedented scale requiring the mobilization of a massive response. The UN agencies and NGO partners are focusing on transporting and distributing food, emergency shelter material, hygiene kits, body bags and establishing a family tracing service, in support of the Government's aid effort. Trucks and fuel are urgently needed, and the roads must be cleared of debris as quickly as possible. Safe drinking water is a priority as is the sanitation situation, along with protection, camp coordination and management.

Q. Why were the authorities and aid agencies unprepared for the storm?

Major evacuations did take place and early warning messages informed millions of people about this storm. But the impact of this super-typhoon was unprecedented. The Philippines has a strong disaster management system and great experience in dealing with natural disasters. The authorities and aid agencies had pre-positioned supplies and began mobilizing assistance immediately. The UN dispatched an emergency assessment and response team as the storm was brewing and they reached the worst-affected areas the day after it struck.

Q. Are you expecting the death toll to rise?

In disasters with this degree of destruction, numbers will change. We hope that the number of people who died will not rise but given the current situation, it is likely to do so. We have to be prepared for the worst as we start to gain access to areas that are difficult to reach.

Q. What is the UN doing –have you managed to get any aid in yet?

We are coordinating with the Government, international and local humanitarian partners. A range of supplies, specialist personnel and equipment has reached communities on the ground. We are also raising additional funds and have contributed \$25 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund.

Q. Why is aid delivery so slow?

Relief supplies are being brought in and supply lines established. But we have been hampered during the first week of the response by the weather, lack of aircraft, helicopters, fuel and the widespread debris which has to be cleared from the roads. Ports need to be re-opened and runways repaired. This is all happening now.

Sudden-onset disasters like this expose the limits of the humanitarian system. We are constantly overstretched and under-resourced. The situation in Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, the Central African Republic and many other places with humanitarian crises is pushing our capacity to the limits. In the Philippines alone, we are dealing with three major crises in three months: the Bohol earthquake; the eruption of conflict in Zamboanga and now Typhoon Haiyan. We do not have the resources available to stockpile emergency relief in advance, or aircraft and other means of transport on standby to deliver aid immediately. In the first days after a disaster, we have to get the supplies together and find the most effective ways to deliver them.

Q. How is aid getting from Manila to the people who need it?

Filipino, American, Singaporean, South Korean and Japanese C130 military aircraft and American Osprey planes are now regularly rotating through Tacloban airport. The United States and United Kingdom have dispatched naval ships with helicopters. Other help, both military and civilian, is being provided by countries including Canada, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Belgium, Australia, Brunei, Israel and New Zealand. Distribution from the airport has been a problem because of a lack of trucks and fuel; we are working on getting these in place. The UN has deployed civil-military coordination experts to ensure close cooperation between humanitarian organizations and militaries.

Q. Are you concerned about security with all the looting going on?

There have been some reports of looting but in most cases this should be attributed to the fact that people have lost everything and are desperately searching for food, water and the basic essentials of life.

Q. Do the dead bodies pose a public health risk?

It is very distressing for survivors and aid workers to see so many dead bodies in the affected areas. According to the World Health Organization it is important to collect bodies as quickly as possible, mainly to reduce the psychological trauma of the community. There is negligible disease transmission risk. WHO can provide more detailed guidance.

Q. Are wealthy countries like the US and Japan doing enough to help?

Donors are urged to be generous in their response to this fast-moving emergency to help the millions of people in need and show solidarity. Many have provided in-kind support like rapid relief teams, aid supplies and civil-military support. The Haiyan Humanitarian Action Plan was launched on 12 November and donors including like the UK, Australia, the USA, the UAE, Denmark, the European Commission Italy, and the Ikea Foundation have so far contributed funds.

Q. What is a Level 3 emergency?

This is the designation that international humanitarian organizations give to the most severe emergencies. Humanitarian agencies have agreed to a number of actions when an emergency is declared an L3, including sending senior staff. The designation means we work together through agreed procedures to ensure the most effective results.

Q. Would you compare this disaster with the Haiti earthquake or the 2004 Tsunami?

It is never easy to compare disasters as they are unique to the country and there are so many factors that affect their magnitude, for example, logistics and access; the capacity of national responders; the resources and coping ability of affected communities; and the impact of other recent crises. It is important to assess the situation and tailor the response to the needs of the people affected in each case.