

OPERATIONAL PEER REVIEW

RESPONSE TO TYPHOON HAIYAN

IN THE PHILIPPINES

SUMMARY OF THE JANUARY 2014 FINDINGS

On 8 November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) made landfall in the Philippines, resulting in over 6,000 deaths and more than 4 million displaced. About 1,785 people still remain missing. Over 14 million people in 36 provinces were affected. The destruction from the tidal surge as well as the extreme wind and rain were catastrophic. Despite the government's preparedness efforts and immediate response, they quickly accepted the offer of international assistance given the magnitude and impact of one of the most powerful storms on record. The humanitarian impact of the typhoon is still clearly visible.

The international response to Typhoon Haiyan was formally declared a system-wide level 3 emergency by the IASC Principals on 13 November 2013, which requires an operational peer review to be conducted within 90 days of the crisis according to agreed Transformative Agenda protocols. The review was carried out from 13 to 19 January 2014 by a team of five United Nations (UN) and non-governmental organization (NGO) officials. The team met with about 200 people in the capital (Manila) and in the typhoon-affected regions (Tacloban, Guiuan and Roxas), and collected information through self-assessment questionnaires, secondary information, key informant meetings, and site visits. It focused on four key areas: leadership; the humanitarian programme cycle; coordination mechanisms; and accountability to affected people. It also reviewed the use, suitability and value of the Transformative Agenda protocols, and the adequacy of global level support. The aim of the review was to identify areas to advance the response (or so-called "course correctors"), and to collect learning and good practice.

The key findings of the review are presented below.

The overall effectiveness of the response was widely praised as much has been achieved in meeting priority humanitarian needs. With logistical support from the military, the international humanitarian community was able to scale-up its capacity to provide aid to millions of people in support of their survival and recovery. Donors in-country commended the international humanitarian community for its robust system-wide response, with many noting that the collective action was a remarkable improvement since the 2010 Haiti and Pakistan crises.

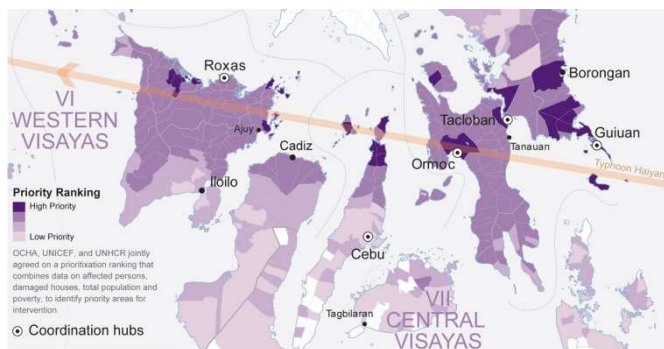
The long-standing relationships with government counterparts, good civil-military coordination, the "co-location" of clusters in municipal offices, various multi-cluster response approaches, and the pre-deployment

of UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) members were all noted as good practice to be replicated elsewhere. There was also a strong sense of collective responsibility observed by the review team. International and national humanitarians worked side-by-side with their government counterparts to ensure a more even coverage of assistance, despite the difficult living and working conditions in the typhoon-affected areas. In all the locations visited by the review team, affected communities and local authorities expressed their thanks for the support provided.

There is noticeable progress on recovery in many places and this is testament to the resilience of the affected communities, as well as to government and international efforts. The international humanitarian community must sustain its commitment to the humanitarian response, while at the same time quickly and urgently adjusting and re-focusing it to ensure a smooth transition from relief to recovery. It should ensure appropriate transition plans are developed, with particular focus on the critical areas of shelter and early recovery/livelihoods, and properly linked with the government's Reconstruction Assistance on Yolanda (RAY) plan. Transition planning must also ensure appropriate handover, and opportunities to provide technical support and equipment to national and local authorities should be identified and acted upon, as part of that handover process. Immediate and continuous preparedness and disaster risk reduction are also required given the high-level of risk of additional natural disasters in the Philippines.

Linked to transition is the issue of uneven funding levels between clusters. The early recovery and livelihoods cluster and the shelter cluster – arguably the two most critical clusters moving forward in the response – remain the least funded with coverage rates of 18 and 29 percent respectively, as recorded by the Financial Tracking Service. Unbalanced funding has affected the even implementation of the response outlined in the strategic response plan. Funding to support early recovery to build resilience is a time-critical priority. It is also a priority to strengthen the leadership, management and strategic direction of the early recovery and livelihoods cluster, in order to better support the response to the pressing early recovery needs of hundreds of thousands of people. Further, given the magnitude of the shelter devastation – with over a million homes destroyed or severely damaged – the international humanitarian community must also step up its efforts to put in place a shelter strategy linking emergency shelter to transition and providing adequate expert resources in the areas of housing, land and property rights.

Map of the Trajectory of Typhoon Haiyan and the Most Affected Regions



The rapid surge of experienced humanitarian demonstrated that the system-wide level 3 response made a significant difference. In particular, it enabled the early coordination of the response in Manila and the typhoon-affected areas. Yet, the number of internationals deployed to the Philippines may have been too much, resulting in 25 times as many UN staff by the tenth week of the crisis, and to some degree overwhelming national response coordination efforts. In a country with significant national capacity, surge staff deployments should be adjusted to take into account this capacity, and a roster of nationally available responders should be established to provide additional support in future emergencies. Internationally deployed staff should better complement government and local authorities at regional, provincial, and municipal levels.

Over 160 cluster staff (including information managers) were deployed to support sectoral coordination. However, concerns were expressed about the frequent changes in cluster staffing as few agencies adhered to the recommended three-month deployment period. Further, 'thematic' technical experts were deployed as stand-alone 'advisors' that set-up additional coordination mechanisms, instead of being deployed only in support of inter-cluster coordination. Communication between clusters and their lead agencies in the field was noted as a weakness as cluster coordinators reported directly to Manila and did not always link to agency staff in the field. One cluster put in place an effective coordination arrangement with a senior roving coordinator who moved between the typhoon-affected regions and Manila, linking operational and strategic levels of the response and ensuring good communication flow.

While coordination capacity was deployed rapidly, operational capacity and relief supplies were slower to be positioned and this needs to be further reviewed for the next emergency. The dispatch of relief supplies should also be included as part of a 'no-regrets' approach. Recent successive emergencies in the Philippines put a significant strain on the capacities of many organizations and contributed to preparedness measures being insufficient for the large-scale of the disaster. The right ratio needs to be established between coordination and operational staff, and appropriate preparedness measures need to be undertaken to preposition supplies.

The appointment of an experienced Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator to support the Humanitarian

Coordinator in leading and coordinating the rather logistically complicated response was highly praised by those interviewed; however, filling the post sooner and for a longer duration, and basing it in the typhoon-affected area would have made it more effective. Additional measures need to be taken to strengthen the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). This includes reviewing its terms of reference to ensure enhanced transparency and accountability related to decision-making and composition. The HCT also needs to more quickly resolve strategic and operational bottlenecks, which are raised by the inter-cluster coordination group, and ensure decisions are implemented jointly. HCT members need to be made more fully aware of the collective expectation of a level 3 emergency. Where appropriate, the HCT should delegate operational decision-making to and improve communication with the coordination structures in the typhoon-affected regions.

The Haiyan response is the first level 3 emergency that followed the humanitarian programme cycle concept agreed under the Transformative Agenda, albeit using a flexible approach. The quality of the deliverables was generally high and in accordance with the timelines. In particular, the monitoring framework endorsed by the HCT should be used as a model for other crises. It provides an evidence-base for making response decisions and improves accountability for results outlined in the strategic response plan. As part of global learning, consideration needs to be given to reviewing the programme cycle deliverables and timeline, focusing particularly on the capacity required; the involvement of subnational coordination structures; and the inclusion of a gender dimension throughout the cycle.

The right balance between global and strategic processes and operational delivery had not been found with the application of the Transformative Agenda protocols in the Philippines, which resulted in higher staffing levels in Manila (in comparison to the typhoon-affected areas). Substantial capacity was required to support global and strategic processes which were being led by Manila. The number of high-level missions and the continuous requests for new information products also detracted capacity away from the operational response in the typhoon-affected regions.

In every location visited, affected communities and local NGOs pointed out that they wanted to be engaged as equal partners. This is the first crisis where there was collective attention placed on accountability to affected people and communicating with communities, with a variety of individual or grassroots initiatives observed, albeit implemented at varying degrees and speeds. The framework on accountability to affected people developed for the Haiyan response should be updated to provide more detailed operational guidance or benchmarks to make it fully applicable in the field and operationally relevant. It should incorporate existing national and local accountability and feedback mechanisms. Responders in the typhoon-affected areas also would benefit from more direct technical support on the inclusion of approaches that address accountability to affected people as well as gender.