



Real-Time Evaluation of UNICEF's Humanitarian Response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines

UNICEF's response to super-typhoon Haiyan was timely, appropriate and relevant to priority needs. Notably, UNICEF played a key role in restoring the water supply in Tacloban City for some 200,000 people, and its education interventions were well coordinated. This evaluation found examples of innovative good practice and it presents a number of important areas of learning for UNICEF's emergency response model.

Locally known as Yolanda, typhoon Haiyan hit the central Visayas regions of the Philippines on 8 November 2013, with devastating effect. Between 6-8,000 were killed and some 4 million were left homeless, in an area that was already suffering high levels of poverty. Those who survived faced multiple threats. The short-term needs and risks, particularly to children, included risks to health and physical security from the disruption of water sources and sanitation, destruction of houses, schools and health centres, relatively low vaccination coverage and high initial levels of food insecurity.

The medium and longer-term response to the typhoon presents an opportunity to address some of the basic developmental challenges and risk factors for potential future disasters. Though the Philippines is a middle-

income country, wealth is not evenly distributed; 40 per cent of those living in the areas affected by Haiyan lived below the poverty line *before* the typhoon struck. Supporting the restoration and strengthening of that capacity, particularly in service delivery, represents an important priority for the United Nations in general and UNICEF in particular.

This real-time evaluation (RTE) of UNICEF's response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines was undertaken between February and June 2014. It assessed the first four months of the response. Its purpose was to draw conclusions and make recommendations for the on-going response and to identify wider lessons for UNICEF with regard to future large-scale emergency responses.

The RTE was managed by the UNICEF Evaluation Office and undertaken by a team of external consultants.

The RTE examined UNICEF’s response to the typhoon under three headings:

- (i) UNICEF’s own programme
- (ii) Its contribution to the wider response, particularly as cluster co-lead
- (iii) UNICEF’s organisational processes, capacities and management structures, and how well these served the response.

The response was evaluated against criteria of timeliness, relevance and appropriateness, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, coverage, coordination, connectedness of relief to recovery and the longer-term programme. Compliance with UNICEF’s Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action – the CCCs – and other relevant standards were also considered.

UNICEF’s programme response

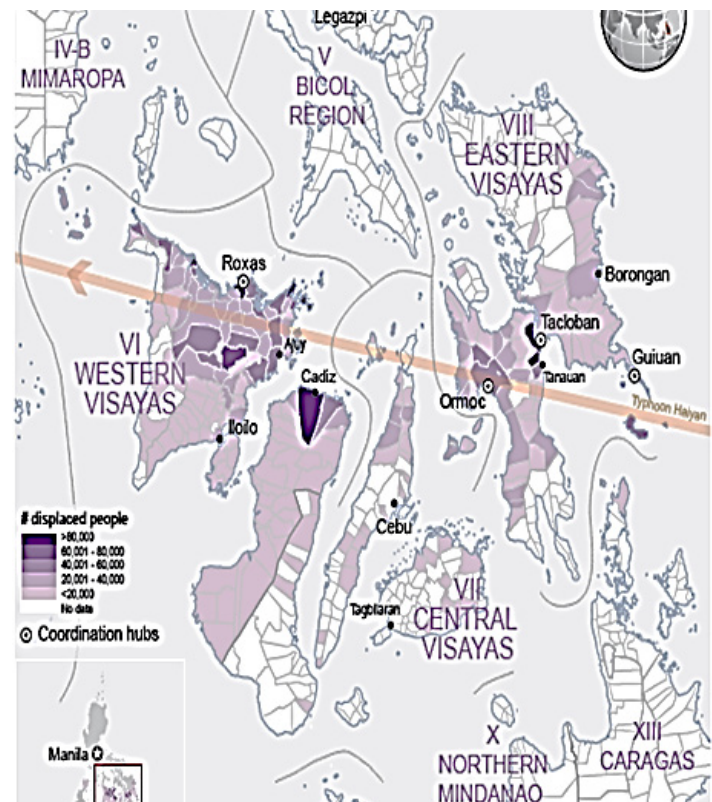
The areas hit by the typhoon were not areas where UNICEF had an existing programme presence. UNICEF nevertheless responded quickly, declaring this a Level 3 (L3) emergency and institutional priority and deploying the Immediate Response Team (IRT) and other surge capacity to the Philippines, initially to Tacloban and progressively to other affected areas. It was right to do so. The response was boosted by an extraordinary fundraising effort from the general public through UNICEF National Committees. The US\$ 120 million raised in the first ten weeks following the typhoon allowed UNICEF to scale up its response without having to wait for the results of the United Nations appeals.

Procedures for Level 3 emergencies

A Level 3 (L3) emergency is declared on the basis of: scale, urgency, complexity, capacity and reputational risk to UNICEF and/or the UN. In a L3 emergency, UNICEF calls for an institution wide mobilisation through its Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure (CEAP). Predefined Simplified Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPs) allow UNICEF to respond effectively and immediately to the situation.

Overall, the evaluation found that UNICEF’s response was timely, appropriate and relevant to priority needs, and effective in tacking those needs, while adding value to the wider response and linking to recovery and longer-term priorities.

Figure 1: Map showing the path of Typhoon Haiyan after it made landfall



Within this overall positive picture, programme performance was more varied. The main findings were:

- **UNICEF played a key role in restoring the municipal water supply in Tacloban City** for some 200,000 people within a week of the typhoon. However, outside the urban and displaced centres, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions were slow.
- **In education, the initial provision of temporary learning spaces and school kits was timely and appropriate**, as was the subsequent emphasis on psychosocial support. The education interventions, especially the response and recovery plan and the back-to-school campaign, were particularly well aligned with the government’s own interventions.
- **The interventions in nutrition had very limited coverage**, hampered by lack of partner and government capacity in emergency nutrition, as well as weaknesses in UNICEF’s own capacities.
- **The child protection programme was not prepared** for the emergency and had to count on external support.
- **The use of unconditional cash transfers to vulnerable individuals and households was widely considered successful and was appreciated**, though it took some time to be embraced as a strategy.

UNICEF in the wider response

UNICEF had significant responsibilities as co-lead with government and others of the Education, Nutrition and WASH clusters, as well as the Child Protection area of responsibility. Senior staff were deployed at the outset of the crisis, and this team activated the relevant clusters, identified most of the cluster coordinators and information managers, defined the structure of decentralised clusters in the field, and provided inputs to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). With regard to UNICEF's performance as cluster co-lead, survey results suggest a relatively high level of satisfaction among cluster members, particularly with regard to overall leadership.

UNICEF's working relations with central government counterparts from before the crisis were generally strong and appreciated. At field level, relations with local government counterparts were established only after the onset of the emergency and, while more variable, were broadly considered effective. That said, better preparedness, including organisation of the jointly-led clusters, could have resulted in a smoother process of collaboration.

UNICEF processes, structures and management

The RTE considered the extent to which UNICEF's organisational processes, systems and management structures helped or hindered the response to Typhoon Haiyan. The activation of the Corporate Emergency

Humanitarian cluster coordination

Launched in 2005, the cluster approach aims to address gaps in emergency response and to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance through greater predictability and accountability, and stronger partnership among humanitarian actors. In emergencies where the cluster approach is applied, UNICEF is requested to lead coordination efforts in certain sectors or areas of responsibility.

Activation Procedure (CEAP) and L3 protocols was appropriate and timely, though some argue it could have been launched a day earlier. The predefined Simplified Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPs) were fully applied here for the first time by UNICEF, and were generally agreed to have proved their worth, particularly in terms of speed of staff deployment, recruitment and procurement.

The deployment of the full IRT team was achieved within ten days of the typhoon. It brought a number of advantages: senior staff with technical and management experience in emergencies, the ability to deploy sectoral experts at the field level, and a complement to the existing staff capacity in the Country Office. The Regional Office in Bangkok played an important role, especially during the first few days of the response. At headquarters level, the coordination between different Divisions and units appeared to work well.

Talking with the affected communities about relief and recovery

The communities, municipal partners and government officials gratefully acknowledged the assistance provided by UNICEF in particular and the humanitarian community in general. The communities affected by Haiyan-Yolanda, like disaster-prone communities throughout the country, are highly resilient. They are openly and expressively grateful for outside help, but they are not waiting for others to help them. They have weathered natural disasters and climatic changes on a yearly basis, using their local social networks and resourcefulness to support themselves and their families. In some communities 'bayanihan' (meaning helping one another) is practiced and local charities and people's organizations have been in the front-line of emergency response. Individuals, churches and community benefactors filled the gaps in relief through cash donations and locally-procured building materials, tents, and supplies. These local actors should be given proper recognition. Their role has been crucial and mutual assistance has been as important as any other factor in helping families get back on their feet.

There were some perceptions of inequitable distribution of aid in a number of communities. There may be a tension here between vulnerability-based targeting criteria and the concept of 'fair shares'. The charge of inequity tends to be laid at the door of government, but aid agencies may be responsible for over-concentrating their assistance in some areas, particularly urban areas, at the expense of rural areas.

The Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) framework has yet to be transformed into practice on the ground. Differential impacts of the disaster on women and girls, boys and men, people with disability, elderly people, indigenous communities and other diversities need to be considered seriously by UNICEF and other humanitarian actors when designing a long-term recovery agenda. The Philippines government also needs to consider this carefully.

The way forward

In conclusion, there are a number of important areas of learning from the Haiyan response. Many examples of innovative good practice were found, but so too were some factors that limited the effectiveness of the response overall.

The Philippines is one of a category of crisis-prone but capable countries where UNICEF needs to reconsider the nature of its role in relation to government. While in this case, UNICEF worked relatively well with both national

and local government, this approach was largely ad hoc.

A more structured approach, worked out in advance in the framework of higher level collaboration for preparedness, could have provided the basis for significantly greater coverage than was possible in this case, as well as reducing the time and transaction costs of establishing new agreements. This could have reduced the need for the hands-on operational approach taken by UNICEF.

Evaluation recommendations on potential areas for improvement

- ✓ **Preparedness**, internal and external, with an overall emphasis on re-aligning the response role of UNICEF in relation to government in collaboration with other actors.
- ✓ **Needs assessment**, clarifying UNICEF's role both in the aftermath of rapid-onset disasters and at the reconstruction phase, including involvement in the post disaster needs assessment (PDNA) process.
- ✓ **Strategy and planning**, including the harmonisation of UNICEF's own strategic planning process with that for the wider United Nations Strategic Response Plan, and the need for a rolling advocacy strategy.
- ✓ **Sectoral responses**, including the promotion of synergy between sectors, better metrics for performance management, and some sector-specific issues including the use of cash transfers.
- ✓ **Communication with communities**, particularly relating to clarity and transparency on what can be expected of UNICEF and its partners, and the need for clearer feedback and complaints mechanisms.
- ✓ **Partnerships**, including the need to develop a wider partner base in the Philippines and to review the use of PCAs or alternatives in crisis-prone contexts.
- ✓ **Monitoring and reporting**, stressing the need to inform real-time operational decision making through basic output monitoring.
- ✓ **UNICEF's cluster (co-)lead role**, including the need to clarify respective roles with government at national and subnational levels, and review supervision arrangements for cluster staff in country.
- ✓ **L3 procedures**, the IRT and surge deployments, emphasising the need to ensure a better fit between existing CO staff capacity and surge deployments, and to provide more guidance on the application of L3-related processes in more developed contexts.
- ✓ **Management of transitions**, including the need to ensure greater continuity of senior management at CO level in L3 emergencies, and for a recovery plan to be formulated by the three-month mark.



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This brief is based on the comprehensive Real-Time Evaluation of UNICEF's Humanitarian Response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines which can be downloaded from www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_74613.html. The purpose of this brief is to facilitate the exchange of knowledge between UNICEF and its partners. The contents of the evaluation report, and consequently of this brief, do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNICEF. For more information, please contact the UNICEF Evaluation Office.