

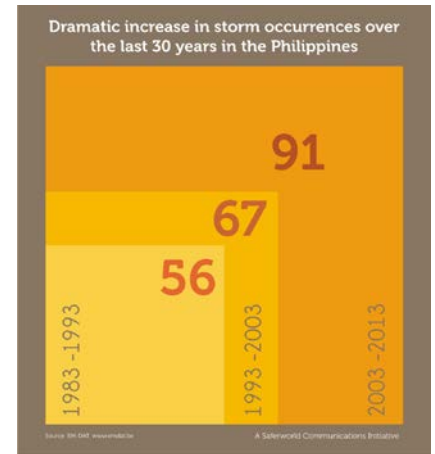
THINK LONG-TERM, ACT LOCAL

BACKGROUND

The archipelago of over 7,100 islands that make up the Philippines has always been a massively disaster prone area. Yet, trends show that over the past few years, the frequency and intensity of typhoons have actually increased. The Philippines was hit by 56 storms between 1983 -1993; 67 between 1993-2003; and 91 in the last 10 years.¹

Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) is the 24th typhoon to hit the Philippines this year, exceeding the national average. It is one of the largest ever worldwide. On Haiyan's path lay the Bohol area in Central Visayas (Region VII). Bohol was hit by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake just a month ago, killing 222, injuring 976 people and damaging more than 73,000 houses.² This is thus an unprecedented and compound disaster.

8,884 barangays (villages), 521 municipalities, 53 cities, 43 provinces in 9 regions have been hit. Early assessments indicate that 11500000 persons are affected and in need of assistance.³ Yet, early media attention is focussed on a couple of major spots including Tacloban and Cebu. As a result, aid in the days to come will likely centre around these spots. The acute need in remote areas that are cut off and un-serviced will be limited. Aid attention therefore needs to turn specific focus to these gap areas.



PRIORITY AREAS

Cash

Close to 2,500,000³ families have lost their livelihoods and will take a long to recover. US\$ 54 million has already been committed across 23 donors.⁴ Yet, aid in terms of materials and personnel will redirect money back to donor locations. Cash transfers, on the other hand, will infuse funds into the local economy, continuing to circulate as assistance over a longer period. It will also give greater choice to beneficiaries. Where materials are to be distributed, local procurement within the country will be more helpful than imports. It must be assumed that skills and resources can be found locally. For markets play a vital for sustainable recovery.

Houses

Over 187,190 homes are estimated to have been damaged (95,143 completely and 92,047 partially).³ Reconstruction starts on day one. Families are already rebuilding/repairing with whatever resources they can find. The truth is that external aid will never match up to the number of houses needed. The focus needs to be on providing the right information, skills and material/tools/cash support. How do we help communities rebuild/repair using local designs, materials and technologies that are safe and culturally and environmentally appropriate? 'Safe return' needs to be adopted as a core programming principle. Long-term settlements need to be prioritised over short-term shelters.

¹ EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database, www.emdat.be

² <http://www.dw.de/philippines-a-country-prone-to-natural-disasters/a-17217404>

³ [http://disaster.dswd.gov.ph/download/typhoon_yolanda/RPT31%20Yolanda\(2\).pdf](http://disaster.dswd.gov.ph/download/typhoon_yolanda/RPT31%20Yolanda(2).pdf)

⁴ <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/International%20Assistance%20for%20the%20Relief%20and%20Rehabilitation%20Efforts%20in%20Areas%20Affected%20by%20Typhoon%20Yolanda.pdf>

Education and child protection

There are 27,640 elementary and secondary schools that lie in the 9 Haiyan-affected regions⁵. Education needs to be restarted as soon as possible with interim solutions. Those schools serving as relief shelters need to be freed up quickly to restart classes. Child protection measures are urgently needed for displaced/homeless/orphaned children.

People with disabilities

People with disabilities make up around 8.65% of the total affected population. This means that there are over 830,000 people whose special needs require focussed attention.⁶ Even more so as they are largely invisible!

ADVISORY

Our viewpoint is formed from our extensive experience of disasters in the region and analysis of previous responses worldwide. We are extremely thankful to our advisors Sujoy Sen and Dr. Jemilah Mahmood for their input and Prof. Ian Davis for his invaluable help in putting together these critical principles. Our advice to humanitarian agencies is as follows.

EIGHT GOLDEN RULES OF RECOVERY MANAGEMENT

1. AVOID PATERNALISM

The recovery process is extremely demanding and all resources, international, national and local, need to be mobilised for the task. But assisting groups must at all costs avoid paternalism, enabling active 'survivors' and not treating passive 'victims'.

There is a principle here to respect. These 'survivors' are the primary actors in their recovery. While assisting groups can play vital roles, they must avoid creating dependency. Thus, they must never undertake any task that duplicates what the survivors can undertake themselves. Their active role is a vital part of their own psycho-social recovery.

2. ENABLE SURVIVORS TO ASSESS THEIR OWN NEEDS

Where possible, let communities and individuals assess their own needs; thus avoiding multiple needs assessments by external agencies.

3. TRUST SURVIVORS TO DETERMINE THEIR PRIORITIES, PROVIDING CASH RATHER THAN KIND

Provide cash grants. Trusting families to determine their own priorities can also help respond to less visible but equally essential needs.

⁵ Department of Education, <http://deped.gov.ph/>

⁶ Philippines National Statistics Office: 2010 Census of Population and Housing



If families are not yet in a banking system, help them to get into personal banking and distribute their aid directly through this channel. Avoid middle-men, where corruption often starts.

4. THINK LOCALLY

Localise all interventions; using locally available and appropriate materials, technologies and resources. This also helps support the devastated local economy and rebuild livelihoods. People with work can help finance their own recovery!

Interventions must be culturally appropriate, sustainable and reduce future risk.

Support local agencies and suppliers; as opposed to the normal trend of allocating contracts to external groups who compete unfairly and take over.

Support the recovery of local governments, who need to play vital roles in local recovery coordination. International NGOs must avoid hiring local officials, at inflated salaries, away from their government roles- an approach that seriously weakens local governments.

5. GIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION TO VULNERABLE GROUPS AND REMOTE AREAS

Pay attention to special vulnerable groups (such as minorities, the sick, people with special needs, elderly, women and children) and communities within remote areas.

6. THINK 'PROCESS' NOT PRODUCT, 'SHELTERING' NOT SHELTERS, 'HOUSING' NOT HOUSES

Regard sheltering as a dynamic process, rather than just a collection of tangible products. Therefore, for example, encourage sheltering of displaced families with host families and provide support to those who have opened their homes to survivors.

Avoid the three stage sheltering process: from emergency shelters/ tents to transition housing to permanent reconstruction. Put the emphasis on accelerating permanent safe dwellings.

7. STAY NETWORKED, TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE

Huge aid influxes can very quickly overwhelm the national and local government's ability to keep track of the inflows. Duplication and confusion quickly becomes the norm. Assisting groups must communicate amongst themselves, staying transparent and accountable. Leveraging technology and new online tracking platforms can help ensure that aid actually reaches where it needs to go.

8. ADOPT A LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE WHILE ADDRESSING SHORT-TERM NEEDS

Start focusing on recovery from the initial stages; indentifying proposed exit strategies and follow-up measures.

Actively engage with the government, local private sector and local academic institutions in order to mainstream recovery programmes over the longer-term.

Prepare from now for the next big disaster, building resilience to save lives and livelihoods. This must keep in mind the growing impacts of climate change.

