

**Testimony of U.S. Agency for International Development  
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U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs  
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**“Assessing the Response to Typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan”**

Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Rubio, and Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for inviting me to testify on the ongoing U.S. response to Typhoon Haiyan, known locally in the Philippines as Typhoon Yolanda. Thank you also for your continued support for our humanitarian programs around the world, which make a positive difference every day in the lives of millions.

It is truly heartbreaking to see the devastation and loss of life caused by Super Typhoon Haiyan, and I would like to express my deepest condolences to those who lost loved ones due to the storm.

Super Typhoon Haiyan struck the central Philippines on the morning of November 8 local time. The storm was one of the most powerful typhoons ever to make landfall, bringing heavy rains and sustained winds of up to 195 miles per hour, and a resulting storm surge that caused near complete destruction in many coastal areas of East Samar and Leyte provinces.

The strong, experienced disaster preparedness and response capacity of the Government of the Philippines undoubtedly saved countless lives. For more than two decades, the U.S. Agency for International Development’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and Mission in the Philippines have worked with the Philippine government to strengthen its disaster management system and response capabilities. Prior to the storm making landfall, the Philippine government evacuated 792,000 people to 109 evacuation centers in 22 provinces. In the first 24 to 48 hours, the government quickly triaged and evacuated many critically injured survivors to receive medical care, and subsequent government response efforts have been aggressive – mobilizing airlifts of safe drinking water, relief supplies, and food commodities to Tacloban and other hard-hit areas.

As of November 18, an estimated 10 million people have been affected and more than 4 million individuals have been displaced across 44 provinces in the Philippines, according to the Philippine National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Center (NDRRMC). There are at least 4,000 deaths, and this figure will likely continue to fluctuate pending further verification.

On November 12, the UN released a Humanitarian Action Plan requesting \$301 million for the response, including approximately \$76 million for food assistance; \$46 million for shelter; \$31 million for livelihoods; \$22 million for water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) activities; and \$21.5 million for health. As of November 13, international donors had pledged approximately \$193 million in funding to address humanitarian needs among populations affected by Typhoon

Haiyan. The total amount pledged represents more than 64 percent of the \$301 million requested by the UN Humanitarian Action Plan.

### **U.S. Response Efforts**

As Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Marciel said, the U.S. response to Typhoon Haiyan has mobilized capacities across the U.S. Government (USG). The Administrator of USAID is the President's Special Coordinator for International Disaster Assistance, an authority that is executed by my office—the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA). USAID/OFDA is charged with directing, coordinating and prioritizing the overall U.S. humanitarian response effort, working closely with our interagency colleagues as well as other USAID offices, including USAID's Office of Food for Peace to help meet emergency food needs, as well as USAID's Asia Bureau and the USAID Mission in the Philippines.

In anticipation of Typhoon Haiyan, USAID pre-deployed disaster experts to the Philippines, enabling us to conduct some of the first rapid assessments of hardest-hit areas and establishing teams to lead and coordinate the USG humanitarian response. Our response management structure ensures a fast and flexible response, efficient and effective action, clear communication, and clear lines of authority.

Consistent with our mandate to direct and coordinate the overall USG response, USAID is working hand-in-glove with the Department of Defense (DoD) Pacific Command up and down the chain of command to ensure the U.S. response effort is effective, timely, and comprehensive in reaching the response needs identified by the USAID team on the ground.

On November 11, USAID's field-based Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) leader and the Commanding General of III Marine Expeditionary Brigade Forward Command Element conducted the first U.S. aerial assessments in severely affected Tacloban city in Leyte Province and neighboring areas, including the southern coast of Samar Island. We have since worked together to airlift critically needed aid to the affected areas and address major logistical obstacles, working jointly to transport U.S. humanitarian assistance to affected areas. USAID is also supporting delivery for the humanitarian community, enabling United Nations, the Philippine Government and other international responders to utilize DoD airlift capacity. The collaboration and coordination between USAID and the U.S. military in this response has been exemplary.

USAID's assessments in the days after the storm quickly identified shelter, water and sanitation, and food as immediate priority needs. In response to the storm, the USG is providing more than \$37 million in humanitarian assistance to help typhoon-affected populations. USAID began to immediately call forward shelter materials and hygiene kits from our global stocks, mobilize food assistance, and support programs to address these priorities.

The first airlift of USAID heavy-duty tarpaulins and family hygiene kits arrived in Manila on November 12, and the U.S. military flew these much-needed supplies to storm-affected communities in Guiuan city and surrounding communities on November 13. A second identical airlift arrived on November 15. In line with the Philippine Government shelter-in-place strategy,

these shipments support emergency shelter efforts that work with households to identify salvageable material and heavy-duty tarpaulin kits to address immediate shelter needs. USAID is providing enough materials to provide temporary shelter for 30,000 families.

On November 14, approximately 55 metric tons of USAID emergency food aid—airlifted from the USAID warehouse in Miami, Florida—arrived in Cebu and was transported to Tacloban for onward distribution. The food commodities, comprising nutrition-dense food bars and other food items that do not require cooking, are sufficient to feed 15,000 adults and 20,000 children for five days. These rapid efforts helped families in hard-hit areas begin to meet basic food, shelter, and hygiene needs.

Progress has accelerated since those initial efforts. In partnership with UNICEF and with the help of DoD-supplied fuel, USAID helped Tacloban’s municipal water pumping station regain full functionality on November 17, providing access to safe drinking water for up to 200,000 people. We are also taking other measures to improve access to and distribution of safe drinking water, including mobilizing water tanks, distributing jerry-cans, and installing mobile water treatment units.

### **Priority Needs**

Despite the significant progress over the past week and a half, significant needs remain:

#### **Logistics**

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, the relief effort was badly hampered by destroyed infrastructure and blocked roads. For the first several days, the only means of delivering aid to Tacloban city was through the small and badly damaged city airport. Land routes into the city and toward outlying areas were blocked by debris, and the destruction of buildings had made many roads impassable in the city. Though aid was available, the throughput capacity of the airport was extremely limited, and “last mile” distribution—challenged by impassable roads—created bottlenecks for the little aid that did arrive at the airport.

Helping the government address these logistical constraints has been a top USG priority, and the partnership between USAID and the U.S. military has been crucial to the progress seen in recent days. We have sought to address logistical challenges by supporting combined U.S. government, Philippine government, and UN efforts. Government road clearing has opened up many transport routes. DoD has operated an air-bridge between Manila, Tacloban, and Guiuan, thereby facilitating allowed access to most-affected Tacloban city, as well as outlying areas. The opening of roads has also enabled a World Food Program (WFP) land-bridge between Cebu, Ormoc, and Tacloban, further expanding the logistics network and easing congestion at the airports.

Remaining challenges include fuel supply in some affected areas, and availability of smaller vehicles for end-point distribution of relief to affected populations. WFP is sourcing additional trucks that will arrive in Tacloban with relief commodities in the coming days and will remain in the area to facilitate the transport and distribution of supplies to populations in need. Despite the remaining challenges, the progress made over the past week means the humanitarian relief effort

is now gaining momentum with significant international contributions and strong engagement and support from the Government of the Philippines.

### **Food**

An estimated 2.5 million people are expected to require emergency food assistance over the next six months. USAID is providing \$10 million toward WFP's Emergency Operations Program that will work to help these vulnerable storm-affected individuals.

In the wake of the disaster, we have been able to use cash to immediately purchase food locally in the Philippines to meet urgent needs. A cash contribution from USAID enabled WFP to purchase 2,500 metric tons of rice in local markets for inclusion in the family food packs that the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development is distributing to typhoon-affected populations. By November 15, the family food packs had reached more than 170,000 people. These packs supply more than six pounds of rice and canned goods—an amount adequate to feed a family of five for up to three days. The food that WFP procured with U.S. funds was able to arrive faster than the prepositioned food that the U.S. airlifted.

USAID funds have also allowed WFP to procure 555,000 packets of high-energy biscuits, which arrived in Tacloban on November 13 for onward distribution to evacuees and other vulnerable populations in typhoon-affected areas. WFP distributed packets of high-energy biscuits to 5,000 people awaiting evacuation at Tacloban airport on November 14, and distributions of the biscuits are ongoing in Guiuan and Tacloban.

The U.S. response to the Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines illustrates why greater flexibility in our food aid programs is needed.

### **Water**

The typhoon has damaged most if not all water infrastructure in affected areas, while a lack of power has left some water systems inoperable. Current response efforts are expected to adequately address sanitation and hygiene needs, as well as medium-term water production capacity through existing water pump stations.

Following a disaster of this magnitude, humanitarian organizations typically focus on identifying and restoring sources of safe drinking water that have not been damaged, such as groundwater sources that can be treated with chlorine and wells that are intact but require generators for production. USAID partners are currently sourcing generators for a water pumping station that is expected to supply water in the coming weeks. Additional USAID partners are providing chlorine tablets for household-level treatment and utilizing bulk chlorine for larger-scale treatment, as well as providing water containers to assist with distribution.

In addition, USAID has directed its Be Secure program—an existing USAID program focused on water security for resilient economic growth—to support the Philippine Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) to conduct rapid damage assessments of water systems and facilities in Aklan, Cebu, Iloilo, Leyte, Negros Occidental, and Samar provinces. LWUA and Be Secure plan to send six teams—29 people—to conduct the rapid assessments over a five day period. The assessments will serve as the basis for prioritizing assistance to critical areas and identifying

appropriate interventions to repair, rehabilitate, and develop water systems able to withstand future hydrologic disasters.

### **Emergency Shelter**

Emergency shelter is a priority humanitarian need in the immediate aftermath of the typhoon, which damaged or destroyed nearly 600,000 houses. USAID and DoD are supporting the government's shelter-in-place approach by distributing plastic sheeting, which affected populations can use with locally available materials to create temporary shelters. USAID is also supporting the distribution of shelter kits to typhoon-affected households.

### **Health**

Due to immediate health concerns caused by the effects of the typhoon, numerous actors have begun health-related relief activities to address the immediate needs of typhoon-affected populations. The Armed Forces of the Philippines successfully evacuated severely injured persons out of Tacloban city within 24 to 48 hours after the typhoon made landfall. The Philippine government has established several field hospitals and continues to identify appropriate sites to place additional hospitals already in-country. Relief organizations have set up numerous other health points and are providing medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, and medical staff to assist the most vulnerable. The UN's health coordination cluster and the Philippine Department of Health have said in the past several days that the needs in the health sector are now being met and that additional relief should be directed toward other priorities.

Our USAID Mission in the Philippines has played an important role, providing six solar-powered refrigerators from its existing health project to enable the Philippine government to implement a mass immunization program against measles and polio and thus prevent disease outbreaks in the affected areas. Additionally, USAID, in response to a government request, has provided two technical advisors to the Department of Health to help develop a mid- to long-term health recovery and rehabilitation plan.

### **Next Steps**

In this initial response phase, USAID has focused on programs that provide emergency shelter, increase food security; and improve the water, sanitation and hygiene situation. Our programs remain flexible to allow us to meet needs that are identified by the Philippine government.

Looking beyond the immediate emergency response, USAID has already initiated and will continue to pursue and coordinate medium and long-term recovery and rehabilitation planning in consultation with the U.N., international donor community, and the Philippine government. Concurrently, existing USAID programs in the Philippines will facilitate recovery and rehabilitation efforts. For example, through the Cities Development Initiative, a focus of the Partnership for Growth, recovery programs will work to bolster the environmental resilience of affected cities to mitigate impact of future disasters – both in the typhoon-affected areas as well as countrywide. As the second most disaster prone country in the world, the Philippines loses up to 2 percent of its gross domestic product to national disasters each year. Therefore, USAID's country strategy has the achievement of environmental resilience as one of its three development objectives for the Philippines.

## **Conclusion**

The typhoon that struck the Philippines was devastating. Lives were lost, homes were destroyed, and livelihoods were decimated. Helping provide aid to the 10 million people affected by this disaster is an extraordinary logistical challenge, but the United States is meeting the challenge, working in support of the Philippine government's strong response effort.

In the wake of crisis, the generosity of the American people is evident. And I would be remiss if I did not call specific attention to the Filipino-American community's contribution. Their historic generosity in providing support to friends and relatives in the Philippines through remittances and in the wake of natural disasters is laudable. The United States has already begun outreach to the diaspora community, and USAID's Center for International Disaster Information has been invaluable in helping with our outreach effort. We encourage those who want to help to visit [usaid.gov/haiyan](http://usaid.gov/haiyan) for more information on how to make the most effective contributions.

The United States was helping the people and Government of the Philippines long before this crisis, and we will continue to stand by them in their time of need.

Thank you and I look forward to taking your questions.