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LIVES

Strengthening Emergency Preparedness and Response Capacities in the Philippines

Context

Natural hazards remain a leading cause of hunger, affecting all aspects of food security: economic and physical access to food, availability and stability of supplies, and nutrition. Delays in response to and recovery from natural disasters can quickly turn into a food and nutrition crisis, which can take several years for people to recover from, trapping them in a cycle of hunger and poverty.

The Philippines is among the world's most disaster-prone countries, exposed to multiple hazards of high intensities including typhoons, floods, earthquakes, landslides, mudslides, volcanic eruptions, droughts as well as sea level rise. Every year, the Philippine archipelago of over 7,100 islands experiences, on average, 10 to 25 extreme weather events. An average of 20 tropical cyclones enters the Philippine Area of Responsibility every year with 8 to 9 of them making landfall. Roughly 900 earthquakes are recorded annually, and strong periodic droughts affect the country due to the El Niño Southern Oscillation.

Apart from geologic hazards such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, the multiple natural hazards affecting the Philippines are projected to intensify due to climate change. There has already been an increase

in the number of hot days (i.e., daily temperature rise) which is set to continue with average temperatures projected to rise by up to 3.1°C by 2090s. This entails significant impacts on the ecosystems, health, productivity of labour, livestock production and crop yields. Based on future modelling, both droughts and floods are more likely, which will impact the economy, particularly the agricultural sector which contributes 10 percent of gross domestic product and employs approximately a third of the population.

Situation Snapshot



Highest disaster risk worldwide due to high exposure and susceptibility to natural hazards, and low coping capacities.¹



Over 13.7 million people affected by natural hazards and conflict in 2023.²



Onset of strong El Niño declared in 2023, increasing the likelihood of droughts until May 2024.³

1 [World Risk Report 2023](#) published by Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft.
2 [2023 Significant Natural Hazards and Conflicts Snapshot](#) published by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
3 Impact of El Niño Snapshot published by OCHA.



Gaps and Needs

In 2022, Typhoon Rai (local name Odette) showed that climate induced hazards increasingly affect areas which were not previously prone to typhoon and other climate-induced shocks. **Evolving risks**, coupled with findings from evaluations on the varying extent of **emergency management capacity** across government departments and decentralized administration, reveal emergency preparedness and response (EPR) gaps and subnational capacity disparities where international assistance is needed.



PREP ka na ba? Are you ready?



In 2023, WFP compiled **30 initiatives that improved emergency preparedness and response in the Philippines** after Super Typhoon Haiyan. Ten years since Typhoon Haiyan, the Government and the humanitarian community amplified their initiatives to protect communities from natural hazards throughout the country.

Emergency Preparedness



PREP: Preparedness and Response Excellence in the Philippines

In 2023, WFP launched PREP, a multi-year strategy aimed at enhancing capabilities of the national and local government to reduce vulnerabilities to shocks. WFP focuses on **strengthening the Government's capacity** on emergency preparedness and response, while maintaining a solid presence in the Philippines to provide operational support during major natural disasters when requested.

The activities under PREP are outlined along three pillars: i) infrastructure, ii) digitalization, and iii) human capital, with gender equality and disability inclusion as cross-cutting priorities. In close consultation with the Government, WFP fills gaps and augments critical disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) assets and equipment for the efficient prepositioning and quick dispatch of relief items. WFP supports with refining relevant existing DRRM systems. This includes transforming the Government's asset and beneficiary management systems, **from an analogue, paper-based process to a digitalized setup**, to ensure efficient delivery of relief items to crisis-affected communities. WFP contributes to improving the skills and technical expertise of DRR experts to operate refined systems, assets, and infrastructure.

WFP uses its corporate Emergency Preparedness and Capacity Indicator to enable the Government in assessing needs and gaps, as well as collectively identifying activities for enhanced preparedness.



Capacity Strengthening on Emergency Logistics

To strengthen national and regional emergency logistics response capacity, WFP works with its government and humanitarian partners by providing **technical assistance** through assessments, training, and learning sessions. WFP supports with carrying out assessments to i) enhance government goods management and inventory system and ii) to inform the establishment of government warehouses in strategic locations. WFP provides technical assistance to government agencies in enhancing their humanitarian supply chain management and disaster response courses.

In the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), WFP works with the government representatives to strengthen the regional emergency logistics capacity. WFP supported the BARMM Government in conducting the **Capacity Needs Mapping** exercise that led to the creation of the Ministry of Social Services and Development Logistics Preparedness Working Group. The Group will lead the development of the multi-year roadmap to bridge the identified gaps and strengthen their emergency logistics capacities.





Capacity Strengthening on Emergency Telecommunications

To strengthen the Government's capacity on emergency telecommunications and coordination, WFP supports the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) in fulfilling its role as the national emergency telecommunications cluster lead. WFP provides technical assistance through assessments, training, and learning sessions to emergency responders. Through theoretical and practical communication exercises, WFP aims to enhance their technical and interpersonal skills that are essential in emergency operations.

WFP co-developed the digital learning platform that contains all related lessons on emergency telecommunications. The training materials can be accessed both offline and online that allow DICT emergency responders to take charge of their learning journey at their convenience.



Project LAWA

To support farming communities in preparing for and mitigating the impacts of dry spells brought by the El Niño, WFP works with the Government through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) to implement an early action and response intervention known as the **Project LAWA: Local Adaptation to Water Access**. Project LAWA is a government-led cash-for-work activity for the target communities in Ifugao in Northern Luzon, Antique in Western Visayas, and Davao de Oro in South-eastern Mindanao. Community participants built small farm reservoirs, with technical guidance from the DA. Project LAWA aims to increase food security and climate resilience of the communities, including the Indigenous Peoples, smallholder farmers and fisherfolks, pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls, and the elderly.

In 2024, Project LAWA is scaled up in 14 of the 17 regions in the country that will be most affected by El Niño. WFP supports the scale-up, formalized under the signed Memorandum of Understanding with the DSWD, DA, and the University of the Philippines in February 2024. The project scale-up aims to implement activities focused on addressing food insecurity through school-based and community-based gardening and diversified integrated farming. These activities can maintain small-scale food production, provide water for livestock, and support other household needs.

Emergency Response



Anticipatory Action

Under the United Nations Joint Central Emergency Response Fund Programme on Anticipatory Action (AA), WFP is ready to provide unconditional cash assistance and early warning information to approximately 45,000 households three days before a severe typhoon (wind speed: 154 km/h or higher) hits. The unconditional cash assistance amounting to US\$53 (PHP 3,000) will enable households to protect their livelihoods and cover their essential needs during and right after a catastrophic typhoon, for example by stocking up food and medicine supplies, strengthening their houses, and harvesting crops early.



Emergency Assistance

WFP provides emergency assistance to populations affected by natural disasters in close collaboration with the Government. In large-scale emergency response operations where the Government welcomes humanitarian support, WFP supports in the emergency assistance followed by early recovery activities.

During the emergency phase of operations, WFP provides **unconditional food assistance through in-kind food, vouchers, and cash assistance** to ensure that affected communities meet their essential needs. WFP prioritizes cash and voucher assistance in areas where markets are functional. In emergencies, cash transfers empower people with a choice to address their essential needs while supporting local markets.

To contribute to the early recovery of the affected communities, WFP implements **food assistance for assets** (FFA) activities where community members receive cash or voucher assistance as they participate in productive activities. FFA activities serve a dual objective of meeting immediate food needs and rehabilitating (or repairing) pre-existing assets.





Emergency Logistics Support

In a national-led emergency operations, WFP provides direct logistics support to the Government by **transporting government relief items** and loaning of emergency logistics response equipment. In close coordination with the Office of Civil Defense and the DSWD, WFP fills the gap in transporting relief items including food and non-food items to reach crisis-affected populations. In 2023, WFP mobilized 396 trucks to transport more than 565,000 government family food packs and 5,000 mt of non-food supplies. This reached more than 2.8 million people, in response to 12 emergencies.

WFP maintains **emergency logistics response equipment** in strategic locations that can be loaned to the Government to support preparedness and/or response activities at the beginning of an emergency. Equipment such as mobile storage units, generators, prefab offices, lights, forklifts, and boats are stored in WFP warehouses located in Pampanga (Luzon) and Polloc (Mindanao). It can be used to set up temporary logistics bases and, re-establish electrical supply, and provide mobile office space.



Emergency Telecommunications Support

As the global lead of the UN Emergency Telecommunications Cluster, WFP responds to the most complex and largest natural disasters globally, where telecommunication interruptions present one of the most immediate challenges during a response operation.

In the Philippines, WFP signed a five-year partnership agreement with the Philippine Government through the DICT to launch the [Government Emergency Communications System-Mobile Operations Vehicle for Emergencies](#) (GECS-MOVE) Project in 2018. WFP and the DICT co-developed six high-tech, mobile, emergency telecommunications units prepositioned in major disaster-prone areas in the country, ready to be deployed closer to the disaster zone to re-establish telecommunications. The MOVE units enable swift telecommunication of critical information among frontline rescuers, including emergency responders and health and welfare practitioners.

As part of the second phase of the project, WFP will be handing over four additional MOVE sets to DICT in 2024. These sets will come equipped with newly upgraded vehicles and telecommunications equipment.

2023 Key Accomplishments on EPR



396 trucks mobilized to transport more than 565,000 family food packs and 5,000 mt of non-food items



2 mini MOVE units designed and developed in-country, and prepositioned in WFP warehouses



343 government and national partner staff trained on emergency logistics and telecommunications



44,119 households registered under the AA programme



4,500 smallholder farmers in 90 locations supported under El Niño early action activity



Scan the QR code to learn more about WFP's work in the Philippines:

