

**Testimony of Nancy E. Lindborg
Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
U.S. Agency for International Development**

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Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International
Organizations
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“The U.S. Post-Typhoon Response in the Philippines: Health and Human Rights”

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, 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.

I'd also like to especially thank Chairman Smith for leading a Congressional Delegation to visit our response efforts in the Philippines firsthand.

Introduction

The Philippines, which regularly faces extreme weather events, has seen its worst year since 1993. With winds whipping up to 195 miles per hour, the super typhoon of November 8 made landfall six times, creating a storm surge that in some areas was higher and reached further inland than the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. The scope and ferocity of Typhoon Haiyan leveled villages, neighborhoods and cities, creating a landscape of utter debris and eerie destruction, with mangled structures and cars and boats tossed into trees.

This natural disaster has tragically taken the lives of 5,600 people and affected nearly 11 million people. I would like to express my deepest condolences to Filipinos who have lost loved ones.

I traveled to the Philippines one week after the storm made landfall. During my visit, I saw staggering devastation, but I also saw the kind of hope and humanity that somehow manages to surface in times of crisis. And I saw a comprehensive relief effort in full swing. I arrived on day eight, on a U.S. military C-130 carrying life-saving supplies that were then dispatched from the Tacloban Airport to surrounding areas and loaded on U.S. military Osprey and Black Hawk helicopters to reach locations further afield.

Airlifts of USAID supplies from Miami and Dubai were being distributed to hard-hit locations including Tacloban, Ormoc, and Guiuan, while USAID-funded locally procured rice was distributed in food packs from the Government of the Philippines. U.S. military aircraft have delivered more than 2,495 tons of relief supplies and evacuated over 21,000 people. And the Philippine government's command centers were operational, thanks in part to our longstanding training and disaster risk reduction programs.

From cadres of organized local volunteers to food packets dispatched via pedi-cab, the relief response in the Philippines was as comprehensive as any large-scale relief effort I've seen. I am confident that our government's rapid mobilization combined with the Government of the Philippines' preparedness helped prevent a tragic situation from becoming much worse.

With the Department of Defense (DoD) in support, USAID has been able to overcome the significant logistical hurdles of providing humanitarian assistance in an island country where the most powerful recorded storm to make landfall knocked out communications and cut off access to many. The U.S. has provided nearly \$60 million in humanitarian assistance to date, including food assistance to at least 2.7 million people, critically-needed water containers, heavy-duty plastic sheeting for temporary shelters, and hygiene kits to prevent the spread of disease.

Now, nearly one month since the storm, the immediate, life-saving response is beginning to shift into an early recovery effort, and longer-term recovery and rehabilitation phases will follow. Together with the international community, the U.S. government remains committed to supporting this wide set of relief, recovery, and rehabilitation efforts to meet the needs of communities across the broad swath of areas destroyed by Typhoon Haiyan—and to help build the resilience the Philippines needs to weather that next storm.

The U.S. Government Response

USAID's hydrometeorological experts tracked Typhoon Haiyan for at least a week before it hit ground, prompting us to pre-position a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) in Manila. The DART began working with the Government of the Philippines both to prepare in advance and to respond immediately. In the event that their assistance would be needed, DoD's U.S. Pacific Command also began planning for a possible response. Separately, our Embassy in Manila issued a message to American citizens warning them of the storm.

The response in the Philippines is the result of a close, dynamic, continuous and coordinated relationship between USAID and DoD that precedes the U.S. response to Typhoon Haiyan. The U.S. military has an unrivaled capacity to move a vast amount of supplies swiftly and to establish essential infrastructure for moving materials. In line with our mandate to direct and coordinate the overall U.S. government response, USAID worked hand in glove with the DoD's U.S. Pacific Command to set up a strategic air bridge to move life-saving aid from Manila to Tacloban. USAID validated and prioritized the relief needs with host nation authorities and moved with speed to reach the hardest-hit areas with emergency relief supplies. This structured cooperation with DoD has been vital to our success in conducting aerial assessments and supporting the relief effort, including nine airlifts of USAID relief supplies to those in need.

We provided early support to the World Food Program (WFP), which in addition to its core role of providing life-saving food aid, serves as the lead UN agency for logistics and proved instrumental in establishing 'air, sea, and land bridges' for the delivery of relief supplies and sourcing the additional trucks, barges and ferries essential to moving aid to the many affected islands. With these immediate response measures in place, the capacity of both the Government of the Philippines and the international humanitarian capacity to reach communities in need have

increased dramatically over the last two weeks, allowing U.S. military efforts to scale back and prepare to wrap up.

U.S. humanitarian assistance for the affected communities of the Philippines has focused on three key priority areas: emergency shelter, water and sanitation, and food aid, along with support to logistics and distribution networks.

In the aftermath of any storm of this magnitude, shelter is an immediate priority. With approximately 1.1 million homes damaged or destroyed by the storm, USAID airlifted enough heavy-duty plastic sheeting to the Philippines to help more than 20,000 families construct temporary shelters, and through our implementing partners, we are currently providing the technical assistance and essential materials to help nearly 150,000 people build temporary shelter solutions.

With water supplies ravaged in the storm's wake, we moved to focus on the provision of clean water and improved sanitation and hygiene to fend off disease. Within eight days of the storm's landfall, joint USAID-DoD-UNICEF efforts resulted in the Tacloban municipal water system functioning at better than pre-storm levels. That water system is now providing clean water for more than 200,000 people in one of the hardest-hit areas. With our non-governmental organization partners, we are getting chlorine tablets out to remote areas so families have clean water, and 124,700 families have now received water containers that allow for storing clean water for drinking and household use.

Sanitation remains a key concern with latrines unavailable in some areas and sanitation facilities overwhelmed in others. We are working to provide more temporary facilities and restore existing ones. Good hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of communicable disease, so we are providing hygiene education and supplies to 45,792 families.

The Government of the Philippines and the international community continue to robustly respond to health concerns. The Philippine government reports that 184 medical teams—including 90 Philippine Department of Health (DoH) teams, 27 teams from local Filipino health programs, and 67 foreign medical teams—are operating in the affected areas. As of November 27, the Government of the Philippines' immunization campaign had immunized more than 2,000 children against measles and polio in Eastern Samar and Leyte provinces. In addition, the DoH is organizing a fogging operation to control mosquito populations—particularly aimed at controlling mosquitoes that carry dengue and chikungunya—in typhoon-affected areas.

USAID's full spectrum of food assistance tools enabled us to help the 2.5 million people estimated to need food aid in the Philippines, demonstrating the critical importance of a flexible and multi-tiered approach. We immediately provided more than \$7 million to WFP for the purchase of rice on the local market, which was placed into family food packs by Philippine volunteers and distributed by the Government of the Philippines to those in need. Later on the same day the distributions of the family packs began, our airlift of 55 metric tons of specialized food products from Miami arrived—these nutrition-dense food bars and a peanut-based paste that do not require cooking are sufficient to feed 15,000 adults and 20,000 children for five days. We immediately began loading an additional 1,020 metric tons of rice that was pre-positioned in

a USAID warehouse in Sri Lanka, and this rice is scheduled to arrive today. We continue to partner with WFP, in support of the Government of the Philippines, to ensure this vital assistance reaches those in need.

We also know that the most vulnerable—women, children, the elderly, and those with special needs—always fare worst during disasters. As part of State-USAID “Safe from the Start” initiative, we committed to ensure our relief activities emphasize the need for protection from the earliest days of a response. We are incorporating protection measures across immediate relief activities, and we are also supporting programs that help with the identification, tracing, and reunification of unaccompanied children, as well as community-level measures to prevent and combat child trafficking.

In addition, we are working to connect current relief activities with existing structures to help combat human trafficking and other risks. To protect the children of the central Philippines during this time of heightened vulnerability, the Government of the Philippines and the international community will need to make every effort will need to be made to ensure and strengthen local and national protective services.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the efforts of our Embassy in Manila and the broader role of the State Department. Ever since the Typhoon made landfall, it has served as a physical platform for all of the agencies involved in the relief effort, as well as a center for coordination and communication with other agencies, Philippine authorities, and private organizations and citizens.

The Power of Preparedness

USAID’s longstanding partnership with the Government of the Philippines on disaster risk management has proven a decisive factor in this response. USAID has worked with the Philippines for the past two decades on increasing preparedness and response capabilities. Efforts like the U.S. Forest Service training for the Philippines government on using the Incident Command System (ICS) to integrate personnel, equipment, procedures, facilities, and communications during complex events have helped shore up local capacity for a more effective response. Extensive technical support and training helped prepare Philippines’ authorities connect with Filipino and international first responders, ensure that essential resources are utilized effectively, and dispatch supplies to where they are needed most.

The magnitude of this typhoon was immense; however, the Government of the Philippines was able to evacuate nearly 800,000 people in advance of the storm, saving countless lives. And immediately afterward, the government quickly triaged and evacuated many injured survivors to receive medical care. The government response over the last month has scaled up—mobilizing airlifts of safe drinking water, relief supplies, and food commodities to Tacloban and other hard-hit areas.

Transitioning to Early Recovery

As the spotlight on the immediate crisis dims, the U.S. government will enhance our support for these vital preparedness, relief, and early recovery efforts. As we begin early recovery planning, we will focus within Leyte, Eastern Samar, and Samar provinces, in keeping with President Aquino's request that donor governments stay focused along geographically defined lines to facilitate coordination.

Transitional shelter, food security, water, sanitation, and hygiene, as well as protection of vulnerable populations, will remain priorities as we shift to focus on sustainable recovery. For example, as many roads have been cleared, debris remains piled high throughout affected areas; so we are exploring the best ways to support locally-driven debris management guidance to incorporate salvageable material into transitional shelter designs. We are also evaluating opportunities to kick-start livelihood recovery and longer-term development initiatives that will begin in the rehabilitation and reconstruction phases. And because the most significant risks for human trafficking related to disasters often arise several weeks or more after the catastrophe strikes as the coping capacities of individuals, households and communities wear thin, USAID will continue to prioritize gender and protection considerations, including human trafficking, as we move into early recovery.

As we continue to support the most vulnerable populations with general food rations, we are preparing to shift to more targeted food-assistance activities including food-for-work, cash-for-work, and/or supplementary feeding, which is the provision of extra food to children or families beyond the normal ration of their home diets. Importantly, we are focused on providing assistance in ways that support, not supplant, local market activity. Where applicable and appropriate, we will seek to incorporate relevant disaster risk reduction measures into our early recovery efforts.

Planning for the Long Term

Typhoon Haiyan is the 25th major storm to hit the Philippines this year alone. So as we continue to provide life-saving aid and to focus on early recovery efforts essential to laying the foundation for continued growth, USAID is also focused on building resilience to future shocks throughout the Philippines.

Each year as a result of natural disasters, the Philippines typically loses up to \$5 billion—tantamount to 2 percent of its gross domestic product. These losses are a deep cut to fragile development gains in a country that still lags across a number of Millennium Development Goal benchmarks. In May, the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) announced that the Philippines Gross Domestic Product grew by 7.8 percent in the first quarter of 2013, faster than those for China, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. But for such economic growth to continue and to benefit all, the development path forward must address the risks for natural disasters. In recognition of this, resilience was one of three key benchmarks for USAID's country development strategy prior to Typhoon Haiyan and will remain a key priority going forward.

The Philippine government recently released their recovery and rehabilitation plan, which has a preliminary budget of \$2.6 billion, including \$1.4 billion for resettlement and housing activities and \$887 million for critical immediate actions. This plan will help guide future investments and approaches.

As we move from early recovery to medium- to long-term recovery, we are continuing current programs and exploring new efforts that stand the best chance of helping Filipino communities and the Filipino people get back on their feet. 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 the impact of future disasters countrywide. We are concurrently exploring additional activities across key sectors—water, health and education, infrastructure, microfinance, energy, and livelihood development—that will help the people of the Central Philippines bounce back, and help ensure that the Philippines stays on the path to continued growth, even after Haiyan.

As we move into this next stage, a USAID delegation will travel back to the central Philippines later this month to help shape a continued development response that maintains our investment in building resilience. Moreover, with the global spotlight still focused on the Philippines in the aftermath of this disaster, we are exploring new public-private partnerships that can help us bring these efforts to scale.

Conclusion

The outpouring of generosity we have seen in the wake of this crisis is humbling – both on the part of the American people and on the part of the vibrant Filipino-American community. I have had the pleasure of participating in several community events over the past few weeks and have witnessed firsthand the incredible energy and commitment that comes along with their historic generosity in providing support to friends and relatives in the Philippines through remittances and in the wake of natural disasters. It is important to note that the most efficient and effective way to help in the aftermath of a disaster is to make a monetary donation to a relief organization already working on the ground to provide aid. The U.S. government will continue to be in close contact with the Filipino-American community, as their continued efforts will be invaluable in the recovery and reconstruction still ahead.

The U.S. government looks forward to continuing our strong partnership with the Government and people of the Philippines—to continue helping them now in this time of need and toward a stronger future.

Thank you for your time today and for all of your support that makes this possible.