

The Philippine Experience of Typhoon Yolanda: Looking Back and Moving Forward

Message by Ambassador Elizabeth P. Buensuceso
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15 July 2014

Your Excellency, Secretary General Le Luong Minh, Your Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps, Friends of ASEAN, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me thank you for your attendance in today's important event. I would like to particularly commend Sec-Gen Le for his personal drive and enthusiasm in seeing through this 4-phased project, which aims at inviting you, our partners, to once again join us in the recovery phase of our efforts to help the victims of Haiyan and to seize this rare opportunity for ASEAN to come up with a template on how disaster-stricken communities could actively participate in all disaster risk reduction and rehabilitation, from the initial search and rescue stage to rehabilitation and recovery. Barely a month after the adoption in NPT of the TOR of Sec-Gen as ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator, he set the wheel of disaster assistance in rapid motion, including the conduct of today's event and the Conference proper that will happen in Manila on 14 August. I also thank the Chair of the CPR, Amb. Min Lwin, for his kind welcome remarks. The member countries of ASEAN did not only agree to the use of the ASEAN Development Fund for this purpose but also actively helped us in planning this pre-conference and the Conference proper on 14 August. They are again with the Philippines today. Thank you, colleagues, your show of solidarity and support once again gives flesh to ASEAN's vision of a caring and sharing Community.

Let me also reiterate my country's gratitude to all of you, particularly ASEAN's Dialogue Partners, international organizations, NGO's and the private sector, who in every which way possible, have not let go the hand of friendship to those who were clinging for much needed help and who, despite the bleakness of their tragedy, had wanted to hope for a new life after the devastation. Because of your help, the saga of suffering of the victims of Super Typhoon Haiyan, has become relieved by heart-rending stories of survival and resilience, of rising from the floods of devastation and having reason to hope again for the future. Images such as those you see on your screen, showing the Filipino people's gratitude to our friends in time of need, have gone viral in most social networking sites.

And yet, much still needs to be done, 8 months after Haiyan wreaked havoc in the lives of the victims, literally taking away their loved ones, their habitations and their means of livelihood.

Let me bring you back, painful as it may be, to the moment of Haiyan's tragedy. Even before scientists have confirmed so afterwards, CNN had rightly predicted that Haiyan may yet have been the Earth's biggest storm. With unprecedented wind speed of 315km/hr and with such a wide stretch of areas severely affected, Typhoon Haiyan is now considered the strongest tropical cyclone ever recorded in history.

No country or people could have prepared for such a disaster. As of 24 April 2014, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) of the Philippines recorded that more than 16 million people or about 3.5 million families had been affected by the monster typhoon. Total casualties numbered 6,300 people while the injured numbered 28,689. To date, there are still more than a thousand missing persons.

A total of 1,084,762 houses were damaged, of which 595,149 were partially damaged while 489,613 houses were completely destroyed. About 4 million people or 900,000 families were displaced due to the destruction.

The Philippine Response: initial Stages

Let me read to you the reflections made by President Benigno Aquino in a speech he made at the ASEM Manila Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, held last month in Manila:

Typhoon Haiyan, however, was unlike anything we had previously encountered. Some experts say that it was the most powerful storm to make landfall in recorded history. It certainly felt that way. Haiyan swept away many of the relief goods we had stockpiled. It affected millions of our countrymen, including some of the first responders who were supposed to give initial assistance to those affected. Several of our airports, roads, and ports were rendered unusable. Communications and power went down. At that point, it seemed like every development compounded the problem further.

Despite the circumstances, our government, together with the Filipino people, persevered. We were able to clear the airport in Tacloban—which was one of the most damaged areas—within the first day of the relief efforts, which was the day after Typhoon Haiyan struck, and three C130 aircrafts were able to land—bringing with them personnel, relief goods, and a communications van to help restore communications. And after that, we continued to work quickly and tirelessly to clear all the paths, to restore the lines of communication, to gather and deliver enough relief goods, and to engage our international partners, all with the goal of alleviating the suffering of all those affected in the soonest possible time. Eventually, through the assistance of thousands of volunteers, as well as that of friends and partners around the globe, we were able to help bring the affected communities back on their own two feet, and are now helping them tread the path to recovery.

On 11 November 2013, the President of the Philippines declared a state of national calamity (Presidential Proclamation No. 682), meaning he was able to:

- freeze on prices of goods;
- order immediate appropriation of funds by national and local governments;
- no-interest loans; and
- allow duty free importation of goods, especially foodstuffs and relief products.

To speed up disaster recovery and rehabilitation, the President also appointed in December 2013, a Presidential Assistant for Rehabilitation and Recovery (PARR) with the rank of Minister, in the person of former Senator Panfilo Lacson. Secretary Lacson was mandated to oversee and coordinate the massive recovery and reconstruction efforts that would be required by the 12 provinces and 171 cities/municipalities in the Yolanda Corridor. The President ordered the conduct of a Post Disaster Needs Assessment or PDNA which is a comprehensive, long term strategic recovery program for the victims of Haiyan. After months of hard work with around 500 technical personnel from various international organizations and foreign governments, working in tandem with national and local government units in the affected areas, the report was concluded and will now be the basis for the recovery efforts.

What needs to be done?

As of 17 April 2014, the NDRRMC reported that the aggregate amount of damage and losses reached USD 2.1 billion. The preliminary figure from the NDRRMC is broken down into the following sectoral damage and losses:

- Social (e.g. health, education, housing): USD 1.3 billion
- Productive Sector (e.g. industry, trade, agriculture, tourism): USD 501 million
- Infrastructure Sector (e.g. damage to critical facilities, road, bridges, lifelines): USD 220 million
- Cross-Sectoral (e.g. environment, governance): USD 70 million

The Philippine Government has earmarked a total of about USD 797 million billion for recovery and reconstruction purposes from the country's 2013 and 2014 national budgets.

Eight months after the disaster, the Philippine Government is now shifting its attention to longer-term recovery and rehabilitation. Provincial-level Recovery and Rehabilitation Plans are now being formulated by the 12 affected provinces in the Yolanda Corridor.

Of these 12 provinces, the Provinces of Leyte, Samar, and Cebu, and Tacloban City, a highly urbanised city and the Eastern Visayas regional center, have submitted their detailed Recovery and Rehabilitation Plans to the Office of the President. The rest are still completing their respective provincial plans. A summary matrix of the recovery and rehabilitation needs of the four areas as of 1 July 2014 are flashed on the screen:

Current Recovery and Reconstruction Needs, Per Area, Per Sector (in USD)

Affected Area	Infrastructure Sector	Social Sector	Livelihood /Productive Sector	Total Per Area
Tacloban City	44, 952,644	7,022,176	295,791,414	302,813,590
Leyte Province	195,074,522	no data	5,027,994	200,102,516
Samar Province	47,811,539	8,051,427	21,774,646	77,637,612
Cebu Province	12,570,887	4,164,336	14,636,009	31,371,232
GRAND TOTAL				611,924,950

Even as detailed plans are still being formulated at the local level, the OPARR is concurrently coordinating with the lead national agencies and consolidating all plans and programmes developed at the national level to put together an overall strategic vision and integrated recovery and rehabilitation of the entire affected area into a Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Recovery Plan (CRRP) as shown in the matrix:

Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Recovery Plan Funding Requirements (in USD), as of 10 July 2014

Cluster Plan	Cluster Head	Funding Requirement
Resettlement Plan: To repair houses or rebuild settlements and basic community facilities and services that are more resilient to hazard events.	Housing and Urban Development	1,736,346,908
Infrastructure Plan: To restore, rehabilitate or reconstruct damaged infrastructure necessary to sustain economic and social activities in the affected areas.	Public Works and Highways	778,881,551
Livelihood Plan: To restore the peoples' means of livelihood and continuity of economic activities and business.	Trade and Industry	772,809,096
Social Services: To increase resilience and capacities of communities in coping with future hazard events.	Social Welfare and Development	658,838,224
GRAND TOTAL		3,946,875,779

ASEAN Recovery Assistance for Yolanda Affected Areas (ARYA)

Despite the great loss arising from this tragedy, the Philippine experience presents us with a golden opportunity for ASEAN to develop an effective and strategic template in responding to future major disasters.

Already, the beginnings of such a template have been explored. At the ASEM Manila Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) I mentioned earlier, the Tacloban Declaration was issued. This document emphasizes the roles of various actors in addressing the challenges of disaster response, including ensuring transparency and accountability among them, highlights best practices from participating countries, making innovation and science and technology for DRRM available, accessible and affordable, and focuses on a people-centred approach to DRRM, among many other lessons from Haiyan.

The August 14 Conference Proper to be held in Manila aims to drumbeat support for on-going recovery and rehabilitation efforts, which I have referred to earlier. It will be followed by a Community-building technical workshop where best practices on resilient recovery could be shared, especially by representatives of AMS similarly afflicted in the past but have fully recovered, such as Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand. A third activity also to be held in August is the Community Rebuilding Stakeholders Meeting whereby local government units of the affected areas will be trained to formulate concrete strategies and proposals to carry forward the commitments made during the high-level conference.

We are heartened by your response today by attending this pre-conference. The task before us is daunting and formidable. But it is not impossible, especially if ASEAN's partners like you will sustain your support to those people who want to rebuild their lives and reclaim their futures.

The Philippine government is committed to seeing the complete and effective implementation of this rehabilitation and recovery strategy.

President Aquino is encouraged by the fact that our collective efforts did not go unnoticed. In fact, the World Bank Country Director for the Philippines, the Honorable Motoo Konishi, said that the way the Philippines handled Typhoon Haiyan "set a new standard on how to shrink the time between the disaster hitting, relief work being carried out, moving on to early recovery, and then to reconstruction," and that they wanted to conduct a more in depth study of our response.

Also, I would like to quote here a statement by World bank Group President Jim Yong Kim who said.

We have been encouraged by the resilience of the Filipino people and the determination shown by President Aquino and his team as they work to recover from a disaster of unprecedented scale. The World Bank Group is committed to supporting the government's efforts to rebuild people's lives no matter how long it takes."

—World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim

May I encourage you, therefore to inform your Home offices and your missions in Manila about this invitation to the August 14 conference and hope that your countries and organizations would be able to be there and once again partner with us in this challenge.

Maraming Salamat.

Thank you very much.