

# Ecumenical ties in Philippines assist aid efforts

BY LINDA BLOOM, UMCOR  
NOVEMBER 22, 2013

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The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) originally was planned as a jubilee celebration.

But the council took a more somber tone Nov. 15 in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan.

"Instead of a grand celebration, we have transformed our commemoration into an act of solidarity with those who are suffering," said the Rev. Rex RB Reyes, Jr. in a statement.

As with previous disasters, Presbyterians are working ecumenically with other faith partners to respond to survivors of Typhoon Haiyan, known locally as Typhoon Yolanda. The initial funds from One Great Hour of Sharing funds from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) are helping the NCCP and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) in their immediate response efforts.

The United Nations estimates that more than 13 million people overall have been affected. We know it will be a long road to recovery, and PDA will continue working with our partners to meet the long-term needs of those affected by the typhoon.

## Relationship with UCCP

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) initiated mission work in the Philippines in 1899, followed by other U.S. mainline denominational missionaries. During the first 50 years, each mission group worked independently, building churches, schools, hospitals and social service centers. Then in 1948 the Protestant denominations in the Philippines came together to form the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP). UCCP is the largest Protestant denomination in Visayas, the area affected by the typhoon.

In a Nov. 14 conference call with representatives from various denominations in the U.S. and Canada, Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza, UCCP's top executive, said two major relief centers had been opened in Cebu City and Maasin as distribution points. He confirmed that many of their churches in the affected area had been destroyed.

"Tacloban remains the center of world media attention, but many areas are still unreached, especially on the West Visayas side," he said. In Maasin, for example, "the food supply is getting scarce. There is massive hoarding. Even gasoline is getting scarce."

## NCCP and ACT Alliance

At the NCCP compound in Manila, volunteers "are working day and night to repack goods to be transported to the affected areas." The council is distributing food and water in Samar, one of the areas hit by the typhoon.

**The NCCP is a member of ACT Alliance**, a global network of churches and related organizations engaged in humanitarian work. The ACT Philippine Forum includes the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Christian Aid, Lutheran World Relief, Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation and Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz.



NCCP volunteers in Manila prepare supplies for survivors of the typhoon. Photo by NCCP/ACT.

ACT has set up a coordination center at the NCCP offices in Manila. The organization reported Nov. 15 that 10 members are delivering emergency food, shelter, water and sanitation facilities in the central Visayas region.

### **Bethany Hospital**

Originally built by the Presbyterian Church, Bethany Hospital in Tacloban is owned and operated by the UCCP.

Marigza said Nov. 14 that the hospital basically had ceased to operate. Seawater entered the hospital, along with mud "and destroyed most of the equipment." Patients were moved to another hospital or went home. He was hoping for a delivery of cleaning equipment, such as axes, shovels and saws, so Bethany could at least erect an emergency space and a roof to begin to readmit patients.

### **'Remarkable collaboration'**

A pastor with the United Methodist Church, The Rev. Liberato Bautista, said he expects a "remarkable collaboration" among the various partners for typhoon relief. The NCCP has been very active in disaster relief. Recovery from some of those other disasters, including flooding and an earthquake, are continuing. Bautista pointed out that his sister, who lives in Manila, had just finished repairs on her roof in October from the typhoon that hit the capital city in July.

"You're talking of news now where people are saying the rehabilitation of the Visayas area will take years," he pointed out. "That is the same thing they said in July when there was a massive flooding in Manila and northern Philippines.

"It's really the entire country, if you're talking about the last 12 months, that's reeling from disasters."

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*Information for this story by Linda Bloom is from UMCOR. Bloom is a United Methodist News Service multimedia reporter based in New York. UMCOR is one of the ACT Alliance implementing partners.*



Bags of relief supplies gathered through the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and the ACT Alliance are ready for shipping to typhoon survivors. Photo by NCCP/ACT.



**PRESBYTERIAN  
DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

**OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE**

## **Packages of relief – and love – for Haiyan typhoon survivors**

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Update from ACT Alliance

Thursday, November 14, 2013



**An ACT Alliance worker interviews a survivor of Typhoon Haiyan. Photo Christian Aid/ACT Alliance**

Working until 2am, scores of volunteers weigh rice and dried beans, count tins of sardines, packets of biscuits and bottles of cooking oil before carefully packing food parcels destined for families devastated by Typhoon Haiyan.

It is a daunting task: fill an entire truck with 11kg relief packages, each put together by hand. In spite of the late finish, work resumes at first light in the small compound of the National Council of Churches of the Philippines

(NCCP), in Manila.

With the roar of trains passing nearby every few minutes and in the heat of an airless warehouse, volunteers

measure out portions of rice. Outside in the compound, others stuff plastic shopping bags beneath bunting hung up to celebrate the NCCP's 50th anniversary. Typhoon Haiyan has put a damper on the party and the celebrations will be low-key, out of respect for those who lost their lives.

Around midday, the last of the 1700 parcels for families of up to seven travels down the human chain to be hauled onto a truck. And with a cheer from the volunteers, the truck leaves the gate, its cargo destined for the eastern island province of Samar where the typhoon made landfall. It follows two previous trucks bearing a total of 3300 parcels, all of which have been distributed to families most in need.

The combination of high winds, huge volume of rainwater and sea surges on November 8 left Samar badly affected. Across the entire length of its route, Haiyan hit some 11.5 million Filipinos including over half a million forced from their homes, according to the United Nations.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance's mission partner, NCCP, is one of five organizations taking part in a \$14m ACT (Action by Churches Together) Alliance appeal for relief work. ACT Alliance has set up a coordination office in Manila and will take part in UN cluster meetings over the coming weeks.

## A HELPING HAND FOR SURVIVORS

NCCP expanded its existing relief stockpiles in response to the severity of the typhoon and urges continued financial support from donors. “The destruction is greater than we can accommodate. Goodness, it’s hard for us. But NCCP goes to the areas that might not get visited because they’re remote or in the interior,” said Khristianne Lineses. Lineses not only oversees the volunteers, but takes seriously his role to motivate them. His enthusiasm is boundless. “Of course, I want to help the volunteers enjoy what they’re doing. It’s not only that they are here to help pack, they are our partners. Just as the people affected are not just

beneficiaries, they are our fellows, our brethren.”

Lineses stays firm to the commitment of NCCP. “Our vision is to help people in need and give them enough to continue their lives. With a week’s worth of food, they can concentrate on re-building their homes and families. A big bag gives them time to sustain their needs for the coming week. We know recovery is a long process.”

Two nurses, Innah Abesamiss and Cyrire Agor, came straight from night shifts at hospital to spend their day off packing at the compound. “Nurses don’t earn much in the Philippines and we can’t help financially but this is what we can give at the moment: our time and our energy,” Abesamiss says.

With them are scores of young Carmenite missionaries who answered NCCP’s call for help. “It is our way of standing in solidarity with the people who we know are really suffering. Thanks for the invitation to help,” Sister Rosie says.

Filipino culture specifically promotes the idea of lending a hand in tough times.

Minnie Anne Calub, who heads the NCCP emergency programme, says the church networks run deep in the Philippines. “Whenever we have an emergency, we call on member churches, church youth organisations and their networks, as well as ecumenical connections – often using social media - for volunteers.” They also have good relations with the Roman Catholic church too.

Her eldest daughter, Trianne Calub, 17, came after school to help fill the bags. “It’s very inspiring to see all these people,” Minnie Anne Calub says of the team. “It gives us inspiration that despite the lean staff of our secretariat, we have a vast number of volunteers and networks willing to help.”

It will take around 18 hours for the trucks to arrive in Samar by road and ferry. Already Calub has started negotiating with an airline to fly the next relief packages out. The task of assembling the next 5000 packs has already begun.



**Local volunteers from NCCP pack relief items for survivors of Typhoon Haiyan. Photo: NCCP/ACT Alliance**

# Situation Report Update

## Philippines - Super Typhoon Haiyan

**NOVEMBER 14, 2013**

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The estimated number of fatalities from Typhoon Haiyan continues to fluctuate between 2,000 and 10,000. Whatever the final numbers, Typhoon Haiyan's effects have been devastating, with aid channels slowed due to severe damage to infrastructure and officials urging residents of decimated cities such as Tacloban to leave and relocate.

Typhoon Haiyan, with the local name of Typhoon Yolanda, may have been the strongest typhoon on record, with sustained winds of 234 kph and gusts of 275 kph. It made landfall in the Philippines on November 8. The islands of Leyte and Samar were the most devastated by this super typhoon, in terms of number of casualties and damage to property.

At least 982,252 families, or 4,459,468 individuals, were affected in some way, with an estimated 101,762 families or 477,736 individuals displaced, the ACT Alliance reports.

Based on current assessments by partners in the Philippines:

- There are still areas that have not yet been reached by government or non-governmental agencies.
- The massive destruction of houses prevents families from returning home. As a result, there is an immediate and increasing need for plastic sheets for temporary cover and enclosed tents for families with vulnerable members.
- Urgent needs include food, sleeping materials, water, blankets, tarpaulins, tents, medicines, mosquito nets, generators, hygiene kits and kitchen utensils.
- Among the most urgent needs are safe drinking water and hygiene kits across all affected areas, as water pipelines may have been damaged and accessible water is not potable. There is acute lack of clean water and food for the population in all nine provinces where more than 9 million people are affected.

## PDA Response

PDA is supporting early response and recovery efforts of fellow members of the ACT Alliance that have significant operations in the Philippines. These partners include the United Methodist Committee on Relief, Lutheran World Relief, Christian Aid and our mission partner, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines.

## Specific Response

The PDA-supported efforts include providing immediate assistance to more than 200,000 persons. Initial response efforts include providing:

- emergency food to 259,000 persons,
- non-food items (plastic sheeting, etc.) to 192,000,
- water/sanitation repair for 205,000,
- programs of cash for work for 63,400,
- shelter assistance for 90,000,
- disaster risk reduction programs for 2,500.

Food items to be distributed include rice, canned goods and dried beans. Non-food items include plastic sheeting, blankets and water containers.

ACT members intend to target subsistence farmers, small fishermen, poor urban dwellers and female-headed households among the most-affected by the typhoon, as they have very limited capacity, finances and resources of their own to recover from the recent disaster.

A preliminary appeal from ACT was issued on November 13 in the amount of \$17 million; the largest direct cost items are for food, shelter and water, and hygiene/sanitation items.

## How you can Help

You can stand in the GAP for survivors of Typhoon Haiyan:

**Give.** Share your financial blessings by designating gifts to DR000012-Philippines. Individuals may give through their local Presbyterian congregation, [online](#), or by mailing a check to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) P.O. Box 643700 Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700. You can also text 'PDA' to 20222 to donate \$10 for disaster response.

**Act.** Like us on [Facebook PDACARES](#) and share updates with your congregation or others.

**Pray.** Please pray that through the response of the faith community, the people and communities impacted by Typhoon Haiyan and those offering assistance will be strengthened, have their needs met, and be reminded of the hope and compassion that are found in Christ.

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*Note: Information for this update was provided by Church World Service.*

# Situation Report Update

## Philippines Typhoon Haiyan

**NOVEMBER 11, 2013**

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### Situation

Typhoon Haiyan left monumental devastation when it struck the central Philippines November 8, 2013. The storm, known as Yolanda in the Philippines, has been identified as one of the worst recorded typhoons in history. A CNN report states that Haiyan was stronger than both Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy combined.

At least 1,200 people have died, according to the Philippine Red Cross; but unconfirmed sources estimate more than 10,000 deaths. Hundreds of thousands of people are displaced.

### Most impacted

Local sources and international news agencies report severe destruction with damaged roads and buildings, downed power lines and telecommunications, and flooded villages.

The damage to airports and roads is hampering initial relief efforts. A report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) states that roundtrip travel on the only cleared road which connects the airport to the city currently takes about six hours.

Hardest hit is the central Philippine city of Tacloban, which is said to be flattened and where hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced, but cities and towns in other parts of the Philippines are also facing huge losses. The areas hit cover already poverty-stricken communities, which have suffered from successive and simultaneous emergencies.

### Information from PC(USA)

(updated information from World Mission, afternoon Nov 11, 2013):

We have received reports reports from all our PC(USA) mission co-workers that they, as well as current Young Adult Volunteers, are all safe. Mission coworkers in the Philippines are Cobbie & Dessa Palm, Rebecca Lawson, Paul Matheny & Mary Nebelsick and their daughter Rachel, Duncan Kirk (YAV), Abby Kraft (YAV), Shelby Miller (YAV), and Mallory Tober (YAV). Please be in prayer for the mission workers in the coming days.

Former moderator Bruce Reyes-Chow is in Dumaguete, at the invitation of World Mission, teaching for a month at Silliman Divinity School. He was staying with Cobbie and Dessa when the typhoon hit and is also safe.

## PDA Response

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is working in collaboration with our mission partner, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), and other members of ACT Alliance to respond to this crisis. Initial response also includes the provision of non-food items, material resources, drinking water, emergency shelter kits and cash-for-work-programs. A major humanitarian operation by our partners is anticipated. Coordination of the relief effort is necessary as many operations are currently in place from many different agencies. PDA will respond with One Great Hour of Sharing and designated funds as the assessment is complete, needs are identified, and the appeal for assistance is issued.

## How you can Help

You can stand in the GAP for survivors of Typhoon Haiyan:

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**Act.** Sign up to receive PDA RIN (Rapid Information Network) emails to be aware of current responses and urgent needs you can share with your congregation. Like us on [Facebook](#) [PDACARES](#).

**Pray.** Please pray that through the response of the faith community, the people and communities impacted by Typhoon Haiyan and those offering assistance will be strengthened, have their needs met, and be reminded of the hope and compassion that are found in Christ.



# Situation Report

## Philippines

**NOVEMBER 8, 2013**

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Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), in collaboration with members of the ACT Alliance, has been monitoring Typhoon Haiyan as it approached and made landfall in the Philippines. As the typhoon approached, ACT Alliance partners, including PC(USA) mission partner the National Council of Churches, were already preparing for the impact by prepositioning supplies and helping people reach emergency shelters.

Typhoon Haiyan (known locally as Yolanda) may be the strongest tropical cyclone to hit land anywhere in recorded history. More than 12 million people were at risk of being impacted by the storm, including many still recovering from a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that struck the country last month. Early reports indicate flash flooding, landslides, and approximately 90 percent of the infrastructure and establishments heavily damaged.

## Response

Given the anticipated intensity and the possible impact of the typhoon, the ACT Alliance Forum in the Philippines is planning to provide drinking water, sleeping materials, hygiene kits and medicines. The volume of assistance is to be determined during the needs assessment.

PDA will respond with One Great Hour of Sharing and designated funds as the assessment is complete, needs are identified, and the appeal for assistance is issued.

As the storm's track is expected to continue beyond the Philippine archipelago, PDA and our partners will continue to monitor the storm and prepare for its impact and anticipated humanitarian response.

## How you can stand in the GAP for survivors

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