

Typhoon Haiyan: Grief and hunger dominate amid survival struggle

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Typhoon survivors: Where is the help?

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- **NEW:** The latest official death toll in the Philippines is 2,344
- U.S. Marines ramp up activity at Cebu airbase as more aid flows in
- Still, relief effort "far too slow," U.N. emergency aid chief says
- Debris and devastation continue to hamper relief efforts

Are you in the affected area? Send us images and video, but please stay safe.

Cebu, Philippines (CNN) -- In the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, nights are often the hardest.

It's dark. It's wet. It can be scary. There's little to do and, for many, even less to eat.

"We don't have homes. We miss our homes, and we have nothing to eat," one storm victim taking shelter in a church told CNN, looking into the camera, tearfully appealing to viewers around the world: "We really need help now."

That help is coming, on military and civilian transports, by air and by sea. But much of it has been piling up at airports.

Photos: Typhoon Haiyan

*Special type of aid needed in Philippines
Damaged roads, airports slow storm relief
Mayor of Tacloban's story of survival*

While relief organizations say they have been able to deliver limited aid to some victims, many CNN crews report seeing little sign of any organized relief effort in the hardest-hit areas.

Blame Haiyan and its unprecedented strength and scope, said UNICEF spokesman Christopher De Bono.

"I don't think that's anyone's fault. I think it's the geography and the devastation," he said.

Still, the desperation is increasing, and becoming more serious.

Police warned a CNN crew to turn back Wednesday on the road south of hard-hit Tacloban, saying rebels had been shooting at civilians.

"Maybe they are looking for food," a police commander told CNN.

On Tuesday, eight people died when a wall collapsed during a stampede at a government warehouse in Leyte province, Philippine National Food Authority administrator Orlan Calayag said Wednesday. Police and security stood by as people stormed the building and took some 100,000 sacks of rice, he said.

Faces of the storm

When it struck Friday, Haiyan, known in the Philippines as Yolanda, flattened entire towns, layered debris over roads and knocked airports out of commission.

The storm destroyed at least 80,000 homes, according to the latest Philippine government accounting. Although estimates of the number left homeless vary, the Philippine government puts it at more than 582,000.

The storm also shattered families. Mayple Nunal and her husband, Ignacio, lost their two daughters, Gnacy Pearl and Gnacy May -- washed away when the storm's ferocious storm surge ripped through Tacloban.

"The big waves, we were like inside the washing machine," Mayple Nunal said. "And we were expecting that we would die."

While Nunal and her husband are safe, receiving treatment in Cebu, United Nations officials have warned of increasing desperation and lawlessness among those left homeless. They said the situation is especially dangerous for women and children.

Some areas haven't been reached yet, according to Valerie Amos, the U.N. under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief.

Scenes of devastation, calls for help

There were, however, some successes.

U.S. Marines arrived Wednesday in Cebu, transforming the sleepy airbase there into a buzzing center of activity as cargo aircraft, tilt-rotor Ospreys and camouflaged Marines got to work preparing for the enormous job of receiving, sorting and delivering aid to millions in need.



The Royal Australian Air Force also landed at Cebu, delivering a portable field hospital that was soon sent on its way to Tacloban. Taiwanese troops also arrived with medical aid, and Doctors Without Borders said three of nine cargo shipments it has planned also arrived in Cebu on Wednesday.

The planes carried medical supplies, shelter materials, hygiene kits and other gear, the agency said.

The U.N. World Food Programme began distributing food in Tacloban, handing out rice to 3,000 people on Wednesday, the agency said, and the U.S. Agency for International Development also said it expected to deliver its first shipment of relief supplies to victims on Wednesday.

The uptick in aid deliveries comes a day after the road between the capital, Manila, and hard-hit Tacloban opened, holding out the promise that aid will begin to flow more quickly.

But five days after the storm struck -- with more than 2 million people in need of food, according to the Philippine government -- even the U.N.'s Amos acknowledged the pace of relief is still lacking.

Storm survivors desperate for aid

The road to Tacloban

Survivors tell stories of terrible loss

"This is a major operation that we have to mount," she said Wednesday. "We're getting there. But in my view it's far too slow."

On Tuesday, President Benigno Aquino III defended relief efforts, saying that in addition to all the challenges of blocked roads and downed power and communication lines, local governments were overwhelmed, forcing the federal government to step in and perform both its own role and those of local officials.

Most of all, he said, "nobody imagined the magnitude that this super typhoon brought on us."

[Could mystery man on tape be patriarch of 30 missing?](#)

Decomposing bodies

Throughout the devastation, bodies of victims lie buried in the debris or out in the open.

The government hasn't counted them all yet, but initial fears that 10,000 may have died have subsided.

By Wednesday night, the official death toll had climbed to 2,344. [Aquino told CNN's Christiane Amanpour](#) on Tuesday that he expected the final number would likely be around 2,000 to 2,500.

The deadly typhoon left 3,804 people injured and 79 people missing, according to the Philippines' National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

While they are gruesome reminders of the human cost of the disaster, the dead are not a major public health threat, said CNN's Dr. Sanjay Gupta.

"From a pure health threat standpoint, there are bigger threats," he said. People need clean food and water.

The slowness of delivery of food and basic medical aid is the biggest threat to lives, Gupta said.

"There are people there right now who can be saved. And it could be as simple as antibiotics that cost a penny."



PHILIPPINES AID (IN U.S. \$)

U.N.: 25 million

U.S.: 20 million

UK: 16.1 million

UAE: 10 million

Australia: 9.5 million

Canada: 4.8 million

European Union: 4 million

Norway: 3.4 million

Denmark: 3.1 million

New Zealand: 1.75 million

Ireland: 1.4 million

Vatican: 150,000

China: 100,000

Source: U.N. OCHA

The World Health Organization agrees with Gupta that the decomposing bodies are a secondary concern.

"From a public health point of view, dead bodies do not cause infectious disease outbreaks," said spokeswoman Julie Hall.

Clean food and water take priority, as well as shelter from the elements.

Unable to move on

But the psychological toll is heavy.

"I've seen dead people on the streets and the sidewalks," said 9-year-old storm survivor Rastin Teves. "It made me feel scared."

[Opinion: Childhood in the path of typhoons](#)

It is important psychologically to collect the bodies, treat them with respect and bury them in locations where relatives can find the graves, Hall said.

Survivors need to know where they are, to be able to grieve, move on and take care of themselves, she said.

In Tacloban, survivor Juan Martinez can't do that yet.

He sits in a makeshift shack where his home once stood. Nearby, the bodies of his wife and two children are covered by sacks.

"I really want someone to collect their bodies, so I know where they are taken," he told CNN's Anderson Cooper. "I want to know where they are taken."

[Emotional extremes for families of typhoon victims](#)

CNN's Nick Paton Walsh reported from Tacloban, Anna Coren reported from Cebu and Michael Pearson reported and wrote from Atlanta. CNN's Paula Hancocks and Andrew Stevens contributed from Tacloban. CNN's Ben Brumfield, Chelsea J. Carter and Larry Register contributed from Atlanta.