

Field teams working 'around the clock' in wake of deadly storm in the Philippines – UNICEF

25 December 2017 – Relief supplies prepositioned by the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) are ready for dispatch to areas of Philippines hit by Tropical Storm Tembin (known locally as 'Vinta') and its field teams are working around the clock to assess the scale of damage, the UN agency has said.

'Our heart goes out to the children and families affected and made vulnerable by storm Vinta at this time of the year when majority of Filipinos are getting ready to celebrate Christmas,' said Lotta Sylwander, the head of UNICEF operations in Philippines, in a news release Sunday.

'[We] stand ready to support the Government and partners to address risks on children's life and health and alleviate suffering of affected communities as best as we can,' she added.

The relief materials prepositioned by UNICEF include water and sanitation supplies, such as water kits for families, large water tanks for community use, water purification tablets, jerry cans and tents.

According to the UN agency, the situation of the communities displaced from Marawi earlier this year is of particular concern as the camps they were staying in were badly hit by the storm and tents have been destroyed.

First priority is to ensure children's lives are saved and protected UNICEF

Furthermore, in any emergency, children are among the most vulnerable and are at a heightened risk of contaminated water, lack of food and epidemics, and other hazards which often follow in the wake of a natural disaster.

Saving children's lives and ensuring they are protected is, therefore, its first priority, stressed UNICEF.

According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) in the Philippines, severe flooding and landslides have been reported in Cagayan de Oro City and in a number of towns in Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga Sibugay provinces.

So far, some 268,000 people are reported to have been affected by the storm, of whom about 160,000 are said to have been displaced. The storm has claimed at least 200 lives and about 100 more are reported missing.

However, these figures could rise as reports from the field come in and search and rescue efforts by local authorities continue, OCHA said.

Tropical Storm Tembin made landfall in Davao Oriental on 22 December and

swept through various provinces in Mindanao causing flash floods and landslides. Tembin followed another tropical storm, Kai-tak (known locally as Urduja), that struck central parts of the country, affecting some 1.7 million people and displaced about 425,000.

[Vital that all Yemeni ports kept open for aid and commercial vessels, stresses UN humanitarian chief](#)

24 December 2017 – With close to three-fourths of all people in Yemen in need of humanitarian assistance, the United Nations top relief official has underscored the need to keep all ports open to both aid and commercial vessels so that life-saving assistance reaches those in desperate need.

I remain deeply concerned about the ongoing crisis in Yemen, where more than 22 million people need humanitarian assistance – 8.4 million of whom are [already on the edge of starvation](#), said Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, in a statement Sunday.

The conflict in the country, well into its third year, has [resulted](#) in widespread hunger, malnutrition, internal displacement, the world's largest cholera outbreak, an alarming diphtheria outbreak and other complex [humanitarian challenges](#).

Amid such a situation, it is essential that commercial food, medicine and fuel imports – a lifeline for millions of civilians – can flow into all ports.

Commercial food imports are needed to keep food available and affordable in markets across the country, and fuel is essential to run generators in hospitals and health facilities as well as power critical services.

Furthermore, as aid supplies are often shipped on commercial vessels, it is all the more important to keep all ports open to humanitarian and commercial vessels, added Mr. Lowcock.

I am committed to working with all stakeholders to achieve this as a matter of urgency, and I look forward to seeing commercial imports of critical supplies stabilize at adequate levels, he stated.

In that context, he said that he was [encouraged](#) by the news of the first commercial fuel imports docking on 24 December at the Hudaydah port (the closest port to the majority of Yemenis) since 6 November, while commercial food imports that resumed in recent weeks have continued.

Further in the statement, Mr. Lowcock, also the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said that commercial imports alone will not be enough to address the vast humanitarian crisis in Yemen or to provide a sustainable solution.

I therefore reiterate my call for all parties to the conflict to provide unconditional, sustained humanitarian access for both staff and supplies across the country and without interference, he said, adding:

I also call on all parties to the conflict to cease hostilities and engage meaningfully with the UN to achieve an inclusive, negotiated political settlement.

[Nigeria: Cholera outbreak in restive Borno state successfully contained, says UN health agency](#)

24 December 2017 – A five-month long cholera outbreak in Nigeria's conflict-affected Borno state has been successfully contained, the United Nations health agency has announced.

According to the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), the feat is a [major accomplishment](#) in the region hit hard by violence perpetrated by the Boko Haram terrorist group that has displaced millions and driven hundreds of thousands to severe food insecurity.

No single measure would have worked on its own. This was a joint effort employing a range of tools by many partners under the leadership of the state Ministry of Health, Wondimagegnehu Alemu, the head of WHO programmes in the country, said in a news release Saturday.

The end of the outbreak (which began in August) was formally announced by the Nigerian Government on Thursday after no new cases had been reported in two weeks.

A massive oral cholera vaccine campaign – the first of its kind in the country, providing some 1.8 million doses to immunize some 900,000 people between September and December – played a key role in containing the deadly disease.

In addition to the campaign, a WHO-supported early warning and surveillance system provided vital data on suspected cases in different locations, ensuring effective and targeted interventions.

Response efforts also included providing safe chlorinated water, setting up treatment centers and laboratory testing, community outreach on methods to disease prevention, and working with local media to spread awareness on cholera and its symptoms.

However, due to the ongoing conflict, many people across northeastern Nigeria remain cut off from basic healthcare and routine immunization services. Health conditions in many camps for internally displaced persons are sub-standard.

Future risks of disease outbreaks, therefore, cannot be ruled out, warned WHO.

“While the achievements of the cholera programme in Borno state are a significant milestone, cholera is endemic to northeastern Nigeria and future outbreaks remain likely,” said Dr. Alemu.

“We must be vigilant to the warning signs that could signal another outbreak of cholera or other epidemic-prone diseases.”

[UN stands ready to support the Philippines in aftermath of deadly storm – Secretary-General](#)

23 December 2017 – Expressing sadness at the loss of lives and devastation in the Philippines caused by Tropical Storm Tembin, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said Saturday that the Organization stands ready to provide support.

“[Secretary-General Guterres] salutes the efforts of the national rescue and recovery teams as well as volunteers who are operating under difficult conditions,” said a [statement](#) attributable to Mr. Guterres’ spokesperson.

“The UN stands ready to support the local and national authorities, in addition to the support already being provided by humanitarian partners,” the statement added.

Tropical Storm Tembin is known locally as Vinta and made landfall in Davao Oriental in southern Philippines on 22 December and crossed various provinces across Mindanao causing flash floods and landslides, which rendered several roads impassable.

At least 75 lives have been lost and dozens more are reported missing. The Storm also displaced thousands of people, and damaged homes and

infrastructure.

[According](#) to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OHCA), 151 evacuation centres have been set up but the number of displaced persons could rise as information from the field comes in.

In the statement, the UN chief also offered his sympathies to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

[UN urges Australia to find humane solutions for refugees, asylum seekers on Manus Island](#)

22 December 2017 – The United Nations refugee agency warned on Friday that the situation of refugees and asylum seekers on Manus Island continues to remain dangerous, and called on the Australian Government to “live up to its responsibilities” and urgently find humane and appropriate solutions.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), since the closure of Australia’s “offshore processing” facility on the island on 31 October, approximately 800 refugees and asylum seekers still remain in highly unsafe conditions.

“Over the past four weeks, [at least five security incidents have been reported](#) by refugees and asylum seekers, security personnel, local police, and members of the local community,” Cécile Pouilly, a spokesperson for UNHCR, told a news briefing in Geneva.

The most serious incident occurred on the night of 10 December, when three people armed with machetes and an axe attempted to force their way into West Lorengau Haus settlement, where 150 refugees and asylum seekers were being accommodated, she said, noting that the group was ultimately stopped from causing serious harm by security staff.

However, the same group then walked to nearby Hillside Haus settlement where two of them, armed with a baton and a knife, entered unobstructed by security staff, and yelled that refugees and asylum seekers should leave.

“The forced removal of refugees and asylum seekers on 22 November from the now decommissioned Australian facility has inflicted further trauma on people who have already suffered greatly – violence and persecution in their own country followed by four years in detention on Manus Island,” added the UNHCR spokesperson.

At the same time, the medical condition of the refugees and asylum seekers is

also worrying.

According to a recent medical report commissioned by UNHCR, their physical and mental health is deteriorating and there is growing risk of violence and self-harm due to the cumulative effect of uncertainty about the future, lack of solutions, stopping of vital services, poor living and hygiene conditions and inadequate health care.

The report also noted the obvious strain that is being placed on the host community and local resources, especially on the health system and hospital.