

An early warning gave time to prepare for the super typhoon

Case Study

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Iloilo, Philippines – The road to Sara District Hospital in the countryside of the central part of the Philippines is bordered by verdant trees and lively communities. Children play on school yards and adults go about their daily routines. On the surface, the lives seem to go on normally.

A closer look however reveals the vestiges of the devastation caused by the super typhoon Haiyan that hit the province just three months earlier, in November 2013. Cut off branches lay scattered on the ground here and there next to uprooted trees. Houses and community buildings lack large pieces of their roofs that were flown away by the strong wind.

In Iloilo, more than two hundred people lost their lives during Typhoon Haiyan. The total number of fatalities in the Philippines exceeded six thousand, and more than 3.9 million people were forced to leave their homes.

The Sara District Hospital, located 95 kilometers north from Iloilo City, was one of the many health facilities severely damaged by the storm. At the mercy of the winds, the building lost a large portion of its roof, while being occupied with a number of patients. Thanks to the experienced staff who had attended ADPC's Hospital Preparedness for Emergencies (HOPE) training, the hospital was able to mitigate the impacts of the devastating disaster. The facility also benefitted from the early warning about the arriving storm a few days prior to the forecasted landfall of Haiyan.

"It took us those two days to get



Thanks to trained staff and the early warning about the arriving storm, the Sara District Hospital was fully prepared one day prior to Typhoon Haiyan's landfall.

everything ready. One day before the storm we were fully prepared with all supplies and flashlights," says Ms. Jennifer W. Salcedo, emergency room nurse and graduate from the HOPE training.

Dr. Jeremiah E. Obantana, Chief of the hospital, is proud that the hospital staff managed to keep all patients safe during the storm.

"Nobody was hurt in our hospital. We had a total of sixty patients as well as families and staff at the facility. We moved all our patients in the new building prior to the storm to make sure they are safe," Dr. Obantana states.

Improved capacity pays off

The hospitals in Iloilo province have been preparing for typhoons like Haiyan since 2005 when the first HOPE training was initiated in the province. The takeaways from the training came into good use already during the category-three Typhoon Fengshen that ravaged the province in 2008.

The Department of Health of the Philippines has initiated a program to improve the capacity of health facilities in the country. Consequently, several facilities have already been renovated. The communities have been equipped with early warning systems, rubber

boats and other equipment for rescue operations. In addition, roads have been elevated and five man-made rivers act as water gates.

“When Typhoon Frank [local name for Typhoon Fengshen] hit, the region wasn’t that prepared. The response to Haiyan in Iloilo was considerably better. With training, we have aimed to increase our human resources,” says Dr. May Ann Sta Lucia from the Department of Health Region 6.

Emergency room nurse Ms. Jennifer W. Salcedo from Sara District Hospital mentions the triage skills as a particularly useful skill learned during the HOPE training a couple of years ago.

“I learned how to manage our patients in times of emergencies and how to plan ahead. During Haiyan, we were able to plan,” says Ms. Salcedo.

All hospitals in Iloilo have been encouraged to work on improving their disaster plans and incident command system as a result of the HOPE training. Sara District Hospital now has a temporary emergency point that can be utilized whenever need arises.

“We have learned to make use of things we didn’t know about before,” Ms. Salcedo says.

During Haiyan, the hospital evacuated its patients to the administration building. The evacuated patients were on one side and the incoming patients on the other. The responsibilities were clearly shared between staff.

“We shared the responsibilities such as taking care of the supplies, distributing information, looking after the patients, triage and being on stand-by,” Ms. Salcedo says.

“The gust was so strong that it could lift cars,”

Dr. Armando Dumdum, Chief of Barotac Viejo District Hospital, describes the strength of Typhoon Haiyan in Iloilo province in the Philippines.

Even though the situation was stressful, Ms. Salcedo knew it is most important to stay calm.

“It is very important to remember not to panic,” she says.

Suffering from lack of resources

Despite the benefits gained through training, many hospitals in Iloilo still suffer from insufficient capacity.



“The Sara District Hospital managed to keep all its patients safe during Typhoon Haiyan even though it lost a large portion of its roof,” says Chief of the hospital Dr. Jeremiah E. Obantana (right) while surveying damages with Ms. Jennifer W. Salcedo and Dr. Armando Dumdum.



Local authorities are investing in expanding the Barotac Viejo District Hospital. “My hospital is officially only a ten-bed hospital but currently functions as a 25-bed hospital with 45 patients,” says Chief of the hospital Dr. Armando Dumdum.

“Most of the hospitals in Iloilo are still understaffed – and over-occupied. My hospital is officially only a ten-bed hospital but currently functions as a 25-bed hospital with 45 patients. We are constantly in an emergency mode,” says Dr. Armando Dumdum, Chief of the District Hospital of Barotac Viejo, the neighboring community to Sara.

The Barotac Viejo District Hospital building is old and located on low ground. Local authorities are planning to relocate the hospital to avoid the risk caused by flooding, but are however now investing in expanding the current hospital building with another section.

“During Typhoon Frank, we weren’t prepared. We didn’t know the extent of the upcoming flood and in a few minutes everything was under water. Since then, flood preparedness has been our focus”, says Dr. Dumdum.

At the time of Typhoon Haiyan, the warning of the storm came in good

time in advance and the patients were evacuated to the close-by gym. Beds, IV stands and monitors were also transferred to the evacuation facility.

“We have learned that we need to evacuate as early as we can, and we shouldn’t wait for the water to rise. When evacuation is needed, we are now able to move our equipment to the gym in just some minutes. During Haiyan, the evacuation process was successful and luckily the flood water receded after just some hours”, Dr. Dumdum says.

Ms. Pine Jay T. Calma, nurse at Barotac Viejo District Hospital attended the HOPE training in 2011.

“I learned a great deal about how to prepare for emergencies and not to panic. The training and the subsequent drill increased my capacity and knowledge to act correctly in times of disasters,” she says.

After the flood, Barotac Viejo District

Hospital faced challenges with water supply to clean up the facilities and move the patients and equipment back to the hospital building.

“We didn’t have money to wash away the mud that came from the mountains. The hospital could only operate again after two weeks,” Dr. Dumdum says.

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