

UN HUMANITARIAN FUND KICK STARTS LIFE SAVING ACTIVITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

(Mindanao/New York, 28 December 2011): Emergency operations in shelter, water and sanitation food, and logistics, are underway on the island of Mindanao in the Philippines in the week after flash flooding caused by Tropical Storm Washi washed away entire villages.

The tropical storm, known locally as Sendong, sent torrents of water, mud and logs cascading through villages and two major cities on 17 December, destroying nearly 13,000 houses and displacing more some 400,000 people. The death toll stands at 1,249 and many remain missing.

Four-days after the disaster struck, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos announced the allocation of US\$3 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to respond to the most urgent needs immediately.

The acting Humanitarian Coordinator in the Philippines, Dr. Soe Nyunt-U, said without the CERF, urgent UN interventions would not have started. “Even though this is one of the country’s worst natural disasters in two decades, it happened a few days before Christmas when many donors are on holidays and offices are closed.”

The International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) Joanna Dabao confirmed that \$1 million from CERF enabled the organization to rapidly build up its capacity to provide emergency shelter materials for the displaced and to start repairing evacuation centers.

“Our priority is the evacuation centers that we anticipate will remain open for a protracted period of time and are not equipped to meet the needs of the displaced”, said Ms. Dabao.

The UN Children’s Fund, UNICEF, and the World Food Programme (WFP) each received \$1 million to provide emergency water and sanitation interventions in evacuation centers, and provide food and logistics support.

“We are using the funds to provide emergency food to 81,000 displaced people over the next three months,” said Asaka Nyangara the WFP Deputy Country Director. “Already we have started distributing high energy biscuits to evacuees in the centers,” he added.

The United Nations and partners has revised the 2012 Humanitarian Action Plan by \$28 million to address critical needs over the next three months.

This is the third CERF grant allocated to the Philippines in 2011, bringing the total amount received to \$11.5 million. Since its launch in 2006, CERF has enabled life-saving and immediate help for millions of people in some 85 countries with \$2.2 billion in aid.

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