

# TYPHOON NOCK TEN - THE PHILIPPINES

## REVIEW OF SURGE PRACTICES

### TRANSFORMING SURGE CAPACITY PROJECT START NETWORK



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## About the authors

This research is the work of Lois Austin, Sarah Grosso and Glenn O'Neil, who have extensive experience in the humanitarian and development sectors. The team has significant experience in research, managing surge responses and serving as part of surge teams.

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**About the CHS Alliance:** The CHS Alliance is a technical partner on the Transforming Surge Capacity Project. The CHS Alliance improves the effectiveness and impact of assistance to crisis-affected and vulnerable people, by working with humanitarian and development actors on quality, accountability and people management initiatives. Formed in 2015 by the merger of Humanitarian Accountability Partnership – International and People In Aid, the Alliance brings together over two decades of experience supporting the sector in applying standards and good practices.

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Cover photograph: On Call roster member, Mark Punzalan, water and evaluation specialist assisting community member in the aftermath of the Nock Ten Typhoon. Action Against Hunger

All photographs: Action Against Hunger

## Executive summary

This report presents the results of the fifth tracking mechanism on the surge response to the devastation caused by Nock Ten typhoon (locally called “Nina”) that struck the Philippines in December 2016. The aim of the mechanism, a component of the Start Network Transforming Surge Capacity (TSC) Project, is to track changes to surge practices by examining instances of surge deployment by the operational consortium members (“agencies”) in the course of the project. Members of the project’s research team, Lois Austin, Sarah Grosso and Glenn O’Neil, compiled this report, with the support of the consortium agencies.

The report draws on information derived from desk research, interviews with six people involved in the response and an online survey of 11 agencies in the Philippines. As with other surge responses tracked during the course of the project, the mechanism concentrated on a rapid review process, focusing on the agencies’ surge practices. As such, the report does not aim to cover the full scope of the surge response to Nock Ten.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Context

The Philippines is highly prone to hazards including floods, storms, tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, droughts – and typhoons which produce heavy rains, causing casualties and destroying crops and property. Philippine civil society is seen as one of the most vibrant and advanced in the world. Disaster management is led by the central government with counterparts down to the village level. Given the disaster profile of the country, the TSC project platform was established in the Philippines in 2015 and has launched various activities to pilot new approaches for a more localised and collaborative surge. One major initiative has been the setting up of the joint On Call Surge Philippines roster.

### Deployment and response

Before Nock Ten struck, the government authorities ordered the evacuation of almost 500,000 residents living in the path of the typhoon. Aid agencies carried out pre-response assessments to try and identify potential future needs, but the absence of a formal coordination mechanism and a common needs assessment mechanism posed some challenges for the response.

The 11 agencies surveyed for this tracking report deployed on average some 10 persons each to the affected areas, relying nearly 100% on national staff with the deployment of only one global staff member. Agencies reported a close to equal deployment of women (48%) and men (52%). The majority of agencies were active in shelter and in the food security/livelihoods sector.

The response was the first utilisation of the TSC project agency joint On Call roster. Three roster members were deployed, allowing agencies to expand their responses and mobilise staff quicker. The agencies’ response expenditure ranged from USD \$10,000 to \$288,000. The Start Fund allocated some USD \$340,000, which provided an important contribution to the agencies’ response.

### Collaboration

All 11 agencies active in the response worked mainly in collaboration with others. Funding from the Start Fund encouraged the agencies to work together, notably in the alliance led by Action Against Hunger. As the agencies involved in the response had worked together in the TSC project (and other Start Network projects) this ensured better coordination and sharing of resources during the surge response.

### Challenges

Challenges were seen in the availability of funding for the response. Agencies struggled to find all the relevant supplies and faced high prices from local suppliers. Several agencies mentioned difficulties in accessing the affected remote island communities as well. There was no common needs assessment framework used for the response and this stood in the way of ensuring coordinated efforts and avoiding potential duplication. Some agencies faced challenges in identifying qualified staff for deployment. Agencies reported minimal funding for and emphasis placed on early recovery and rehabilitation.



## BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Best practices and lessons learned were identified in the fields of coordination, deployment, funding women-led responses and localisation.

### Deployment and response

- Donors, UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) are encouraged to help local and national NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) gain direct access to surge funding.
- Agencies, authorities and UN agencies should make better use of existing common needs assessment tools and approaches to produce multi-sectoral assessments of needs for surge responses.
- Agencies are encouraged to further build the surge capacity of national NGOs and local CSOs.
- The project's On Call roster should consider how it can deploy its roster members to support local and national organisations for surge responses.
- Agencies should pre-position supplies, pre-negotiate contracts with suppliers where possible and prepare local staff in disaster-prone areas to facilitate an immediate response.
- Donors should be flexible in their funding requirements for surge and allow agencies to adapt funding use as needs change.

### Collaboration

- Agencies are encouraged to build outside of crises, not only their own, but also their local partners' capacity to respond.
- Agencies should continue to carry out joint funding and joint surge responses.

### Early recovery

- Agencies are encouraged to work further with local partners in developing recovery plans for affected communities.
  - Donor governments and agencies are encouraged to allocate funding for early recovery through national and local partners.
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## 1. Introduction

This report presents the results of the fifth tracking mechanism<sup>1</sup> of humanitarian surge responses as part of the Start Network Transforming Surge Capacity (TSC) Project. The focus of the report is on surge response to the Nock Ten typhoon (locally called “Nina”) that struck the Philippines in December 2016.

This report focuses on the surge response to Nock Ten of the members (“agencies”)<sup>2</sup> of the Philippines TSC platform. It also makes reference to other key surge actors, such as first responders, civil society, governments, the United Nations (UN) and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

For each instance tracked throughout the course of the project, the mechanism envisaged a rapid review focusing on the agencies’ responses. In this regard, the report does not aim to cover the full scope of the response to Nock Ten.

## 2. Methodology

The research team carried out the tracking process between March 2016 and August 2017, using three data collection methods.

Glenn O’Neil of the research team visited the Philippines in May 2017 and participated in the “Stocktaking Review” of the TSC platform and interviewed six persons that were involved in the Nock Ten response.

The team created and distributed a brief online survey. Out of the 14 agencies surveyed of the Philippines platform that replied, 11 agencies had responded to Nock Ten; three did not (Plan International, Islamic Relief and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines). Two of the 11 agencies were involved only in the Start Fund selection process (Médecins du Monde (MDM) and Tearfund) in addition to Tearfund seconding a staff member.

Desk research was carried out to locate and analyse the relevant documentation on the surge response to Nock Ten.

## 3. Context

### 3.1. Nock Ten

Typhoon Nock Ten entered the Philippines on 23 December 2016 and made its first landfall in Catanduanes province on 25 December 2016 with maximum sustained winds of 255 km/h. It moved on a westerly track and affected seven other areas, leaving a trail of destruction with two million people affected, nearly 400,000 houses damaged and at least 13 people killed<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Tracking mechanism reports are also available on the Nepal earthquake (2015), Bangladesh floods (2016), slow onset crises (2016) and Matthew Hurricane, Haiti (2016): <http://www.chsalliance.org/surge>.

<sup>2</sup> Platform members that are known to have responded to Nock Ten include: Humanitarian Response Consortium (A Single Drop for Safe Water and People’s Disaster Risk Reduction Network (PDRRN)), Action Against Hunger, ACTED, CARE, Christian Aid, Catholic Relief Service, Handicap International, Médecins du Monde (participation in Start Fund selection), National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA), Oxfam, Tearfund (participation in Start Fund selection and seconding staff member to response). ActionAid, CAFOD and IMC are members of the TSC project but not currently present in the Philippines.

<sup>3</sup> Sources: ACAPS, OCHA, NDRRC.

### 3.2. The context

Owing to its geographic location, the Philippines is prone to a high number of hazards, such as typhoons, floods, storms, tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides and droughts. Tropical cyclones in the Philippines produce heavy rains, flooding large areas, and are characterised by strong winds which result in heavy casualties in terms of loss of lives and the destruction of crops, livestock and property. On average, the country is frequented by 20 tropical cyclones annually, almost half of which make landfall.

With estimates ranging between 250,000 and 500,000 organisations, the Philippines has the largest number of NGOs per capita in Asia; Philippine civil society is seen as one of the most vibrant and advanced in the world. NGOs are active in a broad range of sectors, the most common being education, community development, employment generation, health, law and politics and sustainable development<sup>4</sup>. Administered by the Office of the Civil Defence, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) plans and leads the response to emergencies, using a cluster coordination architecture, supported by UN agencies, government agencies and NGOs. The NDRRMC has counterparts at the provincial, municipal, local government units (LGUs) and barangay (village or district) levels.

Led by Christian Aid, the TCS platform was established in the Philippines in 2015, based on in-country interest and capacity, in addition to its disaster profile as described above. The platform has launched various activities to pilot new approaches to ensure more localised and collaborative surge responses. One major initiative has been the setting up of the On Call Surge Philippines roster. Launched in February 2017, the roster provides a pool of skilled and experienced humanitarian staff who can be deployed across the Philippines to support emergency response by any agency. To date, 30 organisations have joined the roster, which now consists of 340 individual members.



On Call roster member Ana Marie Dizon, monitoring evaluation and reporting specialist, during a focus group discussion with local authorities and members of the inter-agency committee of the Municipality of San Andres during the Nock Ten Typhoon response

Credit: Action Against Hunger

<sup>4</sup> Asian Development Bank.

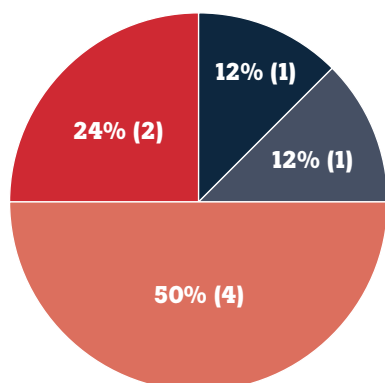
## 4. Surge deployment

Before Nock Ten struck, the NDRRMC and local organisations had activated preparedness activities in the form of health clinics deployed in evacuation centres. Following the typhoon, the Catanduanes province was placed on a state of calamity on 26 December, followed by Albay and Camarines Sur provinces. The authorities ordered the evacuation of almost 500,000 residents living in the coast and landslide-prone areas prior to Nock Ten's landfall. There was no official call from the authorities for international assistance.

A number of aid agencies carried out pre-response assessments based on data gathered from the affected LGUs. Immediate needs were identified for food, non-food items, safe drinking water and emergency shelter. The absence of a formal coordination mechanism and a common needs assessment in the affected areas posed some challenges for the response, as discussed further below.

### 4.1. Speed of response by consortium agencies

According to the survey of the agencies undertaken for this review, one agency deployed immediately (within less than 24 hours), one responded within 24 hours, two within two to five days and an additional two after five days (see figure below). Several agencies mentioned that in some respects they responded before the typhoon struck; for example, NASSA/Caritas surge team was activated three days before the typhoon made landfall, with preparation and coordination carried out with the church dioceses along the geographical pathway of the typhoon. Some agencies faced challenges in deploying immediately owing to human resources bottlenecks and only deployed in mid-January 2017.



**Figure 1: Speed of deployment**  
Nock Ten 2016 – the Philippines

- Immediately
- Within 24 hours
- Within 2-5 days
- After 5 days

### 4.2. Staff and set-up

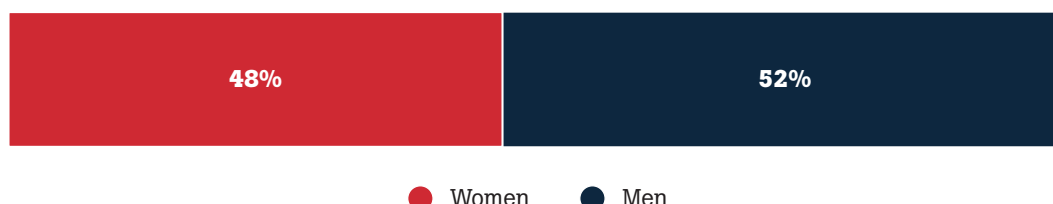
Agencies deployed on average some 10 persons each to the affected areas, ranging from 1 to 15 persons. With the exception of one agency bringing in a global surge staff member, the response relied 100% on national staff.



### 4.3. Role of women

Agencies reported a close to equal deployment of women (48%) and men (52%). This is similar to the ratio seen in the project baseline of deployments in the Philippines in 2013 and 2014 (47% - women; 53% - men).

**Figure 2: Approximate percentage of staff deployed by gender for surge response**  
Nock Ten 2016 - the Philippines



Agencies reported that they involved the community in their responses, and notably women in decision-making. As the health staff at the local level were mainly women, this boosted the building of support from and for women at the community level, according to the agencies.

### 4.4. Rosters and registers

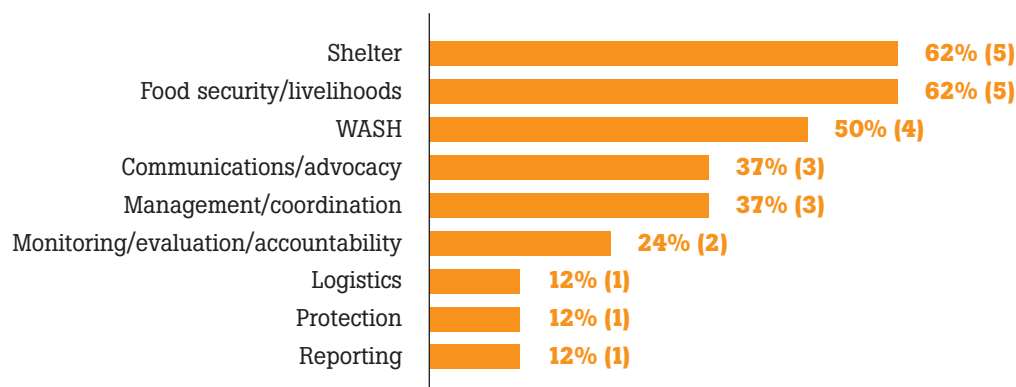
Agencies reported that the large majority of their surge teams mobilised to respond to Nock Ten were existing staff, mostly from the capital, Manila. Agencies tended to deploy their own staff first and then hired new staff for the longer response. The response was the first utilisation of the project's On Call roster, with three roster members mobilised locally to support the response: one water and sanitation specialist for Action Against Hunger and two monitoring, evaluation and reporting specialists for Christian Aid. The roster's technical solution was not yet fully operational at the time of the response. However, the roster was able to identify and mobilise the three members that were registered and prepared to deploy. The On Call roster allowed the agencies to expand their responses and mobilise staff more quickly, according to the agencies involved.

### 4.5. Sectoral approaches

The majority of agencies were active in shelter and food security/livelihoods sector, reflecting the immediate needs, given the destruction of many houses in the affected areas, as seen in the figure below.

One local agency, PDRRN, took an active role in coordination, given the absence of a formal coordination mechanism (the cluster system was not activated). As part of the Humanitarian Resource Consortium (HRC), PDRRN stepped in to provide coordination support in the affected areas. They initiated and set up coordination meetings with NGOs, local authorities, civil society actors and the Philippine Red Cross, which enhanced coordination and information sharing.

**Figure 3: Percentage of agencies active per sector in surge response**  
Nock Ten 2016 - the Philippines



## 4.6. Resources

### Finance

The expenditure on the surge response for agencies ranged from USD \$10,000 to \$288,000, with an average of some USD \$88,500 (based on responses from six agencies).

The Start Network allocated some USD \$340,000 (GBP 250,000) to the Nock Ten response from the Start Fund. The Start Fund was activated on 3 January 2017, following the submission of an Alert Note by eleven agencies (of the TSC project and other Start Network projects), with the support of Action Against Hunger. Four members, judged to have submitted the best proposals, through a peer selection process, received funding: a first consortium, led by Action Against Hunger with the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), and Handicap International and a second proposal from Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

On 29 December 2017, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies launched an appeal for some USD \$ 1.6 million (1.6 million CHF) to support the Philippines Red Cross in assisting affected people in the Catanduanes province.

The Start Network funding was an important contribution to the agencies' response as one agency commented: "the use of Start Fund resources enabled it (CRS) to expand its response, increase volume of supply for distribution and quickly deploy pre-positioned stockpile"<sup>5</sup>.

### Materials and equipment

Agencies reported using mainly food stocks, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) materials and equipment and cash programming tools. According to agencies both the authorities and humanitarian organisations supported the response with pre-positioned stocks. Challenges were seen though in getting in the materials and staff to affected areas in remote islands.



Credit: Action Against Hunger

<sup>5</sup> Christian Aid (2017); interview with CRS.

## 5. Collaboration

All 11 agencies who responded to the survey worked mainly in collaboration with others, such as local organisations, the authorities and other INGOs for the response – this is double the number observed during the project's baseline survey (50%) of 2015. Funding from the Start Fund encouraged the agencies to work together, notably the alliance led by Action Against Hunger. The agencies indicated that having worked together in the TSC project (and other Start Network projects) encouraged better coordination and sharing of resources.

Working with local partners was seen as beneficial during the response. For example, the partnership led by Action Against Hunger allowed the agencies to leverage each other's competencies. Working with their local partner, Simon of Cyrene provided an opportunity for some post-crisis work to continue.

Another example of local level partnerships was seen between CRS and CARITAS, which made use of the extensive church network of CARITAS in the municipality of Virac, Catanduanes province. This facilitated access to affected communities and the validation of target beneficiaries.

In their responses agencies also collaborated with the authorities and local NGOs, in joint operations, cooperation and exchange of information. For example, NGOs collaborated with LGUs, using their resources, such as staff, transport and warehousing. Some issues were reported with collaboration between the different levels of authorities, and the consequent exchange of information.



On Call roster member, Mark Punzalan, water and evaluation specialist assessing communities for the Nock Ten Typhoon Response

Credit: Action Against Hunger



## 6. Challenges

### 6.1. Resource management

**Funding:** Funding for the emergency response was mentioned a challenge. The Start Fund was a well appreciated funding source that enabled INGOs and their partners to give a stronger response. At the same time, the Fund was perceived as a mechanism for INGO funding rather than for local and national organisations. Concern was also raised for the funding of the recovery of communities following the crisis phase (see below).

**Supplies:** Some agencies benefited from pre-positioned supplies, both their own and those of the authorities, but these were in a different region, which incurred additional transport costs. Other agencies struggled to find all the relevant supplies and faced high prices from local suppliers.

### 6.2. Policies and systems

**Access:** Several agencies mentioned challenges in accessing remote island communities in need, which led to delayed responses.

**Needs assessment framework:** Although some agencies and the authorities carried out needs assessments, there was no common needs assessment framework. The review of surge practices for the 2016 Bangladesh floods found a common needs assessment was extremely beneficial to ensuring more effective responses<sup>6</sup>.

### 6.3. Staff and set-up

Agencies benefited from the existing capacity of their national staff. Some faced challenges in identifying qualified staff for deployment, and were supported by the staff made available by the project's On Call roster. As the response was largely carried out in collaboration with local organisations, some challenges were seen in that these organisations were mostly working in the development field and therefore needed support and guidance in the surge response. National NGOs needed support to develop their ability to work closer with local civil society organisations (CSOs) to respond to crises.

### 6.4. Early recovery

Available funding and emphasis placed on early recovery and rehabilitation was reported as being minimal. In many areas, residents' livelihoods were destroyed. For example, it is estimated that the abaca plantations, which produce raw materials used for paper and rope making, will take two to three years to recover. One agency reported a positive experience where it worked with local governments and communities to help facilitate their recovery plans<sup>7</sup>.

## 7. Best practices and lessons learned

The tracking mechanism was able to identify the following examples of good practice and lessons learned:

- The local level coordination for the Nock Ten response showed the possibility of a decentralised emergency response.
- The participation of agencies in the TSC and other Start Network projects facilitated joint funding and surge response operations.
- The project's On Call roster allowed agencies to expand their response and react more quickly.
- Access to Start funding enabled agencies to increase their level of response.
- The involvement of local partners increased the quality of the response and the possibility of more in-depth consideration of early recovery and rehabilitation aspects.
- Women leading the surge response encourage greater participation of women responders at the community level.

<sup>6</sup> Transforming Surge Capacity Project.

<sup>7</sup> Humanitarian Response Consortium.



## 8. Recommendations

The following key recommendations are drawn from the findings of this report:

### 8.1. Deployment and response

- Donors, UN agencies and INGOs are encouraged to help local and national NGOs and CSOs gain direct access of surge funding.
- Agencies, authorities and UN agencies should make better use of existing common needs assessment tools and approaches to produce multi-sectoral assessments of needs for surge responses.
- Agencies are encouraged to further build the surge capacity of National NGOs and local CSOs.
- The project's On Call roster should consider how it can deploy its roster members to support local and national organisations for surge responses.

### 8.2. Collaboration

- Agencies are encouraged to build outside of crises, not only their own, but also their local partners' capacity to respond.
- Agencies should continue to carry out joint funding and operations in surge responses.

### 8.3. Early recovery

- Agencies are encouraged to work further with local partners in developing recovery plans for affected communities.
  - Donor governments and agencies are encouraged to allocate funding for early recovery through national and local partners.
-

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*All linked documents accessed on 1 October 2017*

## List of interviewees and survey respondents

Organisation	Survey response	Interview	Document review
Action Against Hunger			•
CAFOD	•		•
CARE International	•		•
Christian Aid	•	•	•
IMC			•
Islamic Relief	•		•
Plan International			•
Muslim Aid			•
Save the Children UK	•		•
Tearfund	•	•	•

## Persons interviewed

Organisation	Name	Position
TSC Project, Christian Aid	Cyra Michelle Bullecer	Programme Officer
TSC Project, Christian Aid	Ana Maria Dizon	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist
Médecins du Monde Philippines	Pedro Porrino	General Coordinator
Tearfund	Sanjeev Bhanja	Country Director
PDRRN	Ann Ria S. Barrera	Advocacy Officer
Tearfund	Mary Joy Gonzales	Training and Advocacy Officer