World Vision on alert as Typhoon Bopha heads for Philippines

- Forecasters predicting storm could bring heavy flooding, wind damage on same level as Typhoon Washi
- Washi killed more than 1,000 people, left thousands more homeless in December 2011

MANILA, 3 December 2012 - With Typhoon Bopha set to hit the Philippines within the next 24 hours, World Vision is preparing its response and coordinating with local government disaster units to ensure the safety of children and families that will be impacted by the storm.

“World Vision is currently monitoring our assisted areas along the trail of the typhoon. We alerted the communities, especially families in the danger zones, to be ready to evacuate from possible floods and landslides brought by the storm, which experts say could be much worse than Washi,” said Bebeth Tiu, World Vision’s Director of Emergency Response in the Philippines.

World Vision has activated its quick response teams across Visayas and Mindanao. Bopha is expected to make landfall by Tuesday morning, local Philippines time, coming in via southern Philippines and possibly affecting provinces in the Eastern Visayas, Northeast Mindanao, and the Bicol Region. World Vision currently works with vulnerable families in the poorest communities in these areas assisting over 50,000 children through development programs.

“We are now experiencing persistent rains here,” said Annaliza Aspirin, a World Vision staff member based in Surigao del Sur. “Classes and work have been suspended and the government already warned communities in low-lying and flood-prone areas to prepare for evacuation as we brace for more heavy rains when Bopha hits land.”

Government disaster authorities warn the public that rains brought by Typhoon Bopha will unleash a hazardous force stronger than Typhoon Washi. That storm killed more than 1,000 people and left hundreds of thousands more devastated in the southern Philippines on December 2011, two weeks before Christmas. Many residents have already heeded the local government’s advice for preemptive evacuation as families head to evacuation centers set up in schools. Mylene Dapigan, a 24-year-old mother of two rushed to the evacuation center with her family.

“We lost our loved ones last year. We don’t want this to happen again,” she said.

Crislyn Felisilda, World Vision Emergency Communications Officer in Cagayan de Oro City saw the evacuations take place as people fled, carrying what belongings they could.
“Local government units doubled preparations and secure evacuation plans following Typhoon Washi,” she said. “People are worried of the news that Typhoon Bopha is stronger than the killer storm Washi that devastated most parts of Cagayan de Oro City last year. Sunday masses yesterday offered prayers and messages of typhoon preparedness as we celebrate Christmas season.”

Meanwhile World Vision staff are equipping their own families for the worst, even as they prepare to help others.

“My family’s packing up clothes, stocking ready-to-eat foods, including first aid medicines. Some residents near the river bank have evacuated to relatives living in higher grounds. Some people are buying sacks to pack up their clothes. The trucks and sirens of local government are on standby. We don’t want to experience the loss and pain of Washi again,” says Jane Salingay, a World Vision staff member.

The Philippines, ranked the 3rd most disaster-prone country in the world, experiences around 20 typhoons a year. Bopha is the 16th typhoon to enter the country this year. Weather authorities expect another typhoon before the year ends.

World Vision, through its Washi Emergency Response that lasted for 3 months until February 2012, assisted affected families in the hardest-hit communities in the urban centers and rural areas, helping more than 50,000 individuals, including 10,000 children. World Vision was able to provide food and food-for-work assistance, water purifying packets and school kits for children.

On-the-ground interviews and photos are available. For more information please contact Lauren Fisher (lafisher@worldvision.org) +1.206.310.5476.

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About World Vision:
World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. We serve the world’s poor — regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender. For more information on their efforts, visit WorldVision.org/press or follow them on Twitter at @WorldVisionNews.