

## UBS Optimus Foundation

### *Emergency Rapid Response Fund – Update, 6 Feb. 2014*

In response to the typhoon that hit the Philippines on 8 November 2013, the UBS Optimus Foundation launched an Emergency Rapid Response Fund to focus on meeting the immediate and long-term needs of children affected by crises. According to UNICEF a total of 5.9 million children were affected by the typhoon, of which 380,700 were less than a year old.

The fund has been set up in three phases. The first phase of funding was designated for activities providing immediate relief to emergency victims through trusted international partners. The second phase of funding now focuses on rehabilitation efforts that connect local and international partners, incorporating a robust monitoring and evaluation component. The third phase will focus on longer term development projects.

The headlines have now disappeared. However the situation on the ground remains difficult and has been aggravated by a Tropical Depression that passed in the

Visayas regions from 17 to 20 January. This caused new displacements and has hampered the ongoing response efforts. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 26,000 people still live in evacuation centers and nearly 5.6 million people require food and support. Agriculture and fishery industries have been severely affected: more than 90 per cent of the coconut trees and thousands of fishing vessels in affected areas have been damaged or completely destroyed.

#### **What has happened to date?**

As part of the first phase, two grants for a total of 400,000 CHF were allocated by the UBS Optimus Foundation to the emergency response just a few days after the typhoon, when basic needs were not yet being addressed for most of those affected.

With the funds immediately distributed to *Save the Children*, 4,485 beneficiaries – including 1,980 children –



Angeline, 11, holds her "essential needs" kit, distributed on Panay Island (Picture: Save the Children)

were reached in the difficult-to-access eastern part of Panay Island providing essential water, shelter and hygiene kits for a minimum of two to three months. As Ned Olney, the country director for Save the Children commented, this grant was "critical to our early life-saving emergency efforts".

*Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)* then received additional funds that partially financed the efforts of their nine mobile clinic teams who have now treated more than 12,500 patients as well as a vaccination campaign that has protected more than 16,000 children. Moreover, MSF provided emergency nutrition biscuits for around 18,000 people, with a focus on children under five and pregnant and breastfeeding women.

### **What will happen next?**

In the second phase that links immediate relief to longer term rehabilitation, we will fund programs with both international and local partners focused on rehabilitating maternal and childcare health services in the Visayas regions.

Based on the screening of the nutritional status of children and pregnant women we will provide adequate nutrition and treat malnutrition where necessary. We also plan to fund the creation of parent-baby friendly spaces to provide psychosocial support and maternal health care. All our funding efforts will have a particular focus on children under five.

The assessment of the impact of our funding remains a key characteristic of our approach. For this purpose an adequate and appropriate monitoring system will be installed prior to project inception. These impact evaluations will be conducted by an independent expert.

### **Voices from the field**

Ana Cecilia Weintraub, a psychologist from Brazil, arrived in the Philippines in early December.

"Most people are dealing with the typhoon in the most positive way possible under the circumstances. There are some acute mental health cases, but only about half are related to the typhoon, the others are chronic patients who were already suffering. I am also seeing some cases of children who are crying, are very afraid, and cannot bear to be away from their parents. I try to work with the family to show them that their child's reaction is completely understandable.

As a part of my therapy sessions on the islands I have asked children to draw a picture of their community before and after the typhoon, and another as they would like it to be when it has been rebuilt. We do all of the drawings on the same piece of paper. Then we make the paper into a boat and set it out to sail on the sea with a wish. I explain to the children that where I am from in Brazil, this is something that we do at this time of year, hoping that the New Year will bring good things to everyone.

People's psychological recovery also depends on the rebuilding effort. If the physical environment doesn't improve, if it takes a long time for people to rebuild their lives, they may still be stressed – it is not a disease but a social problem."



Picture: Kristine Langelund / MSF

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