CASE STUDY SERIES

PHILIPPINES

Learning from Yolanda:

Strengthening the Philippines' Disaster Preparedness and Response with Family Food Packs

WFP
World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

On 8 November 2013, Super Typhoon Yolanda hit the Philippines. One of the most powerful typhoons ever recorded, it devastated much of the Philippines and especially the eastern island of Leyte.

Responsible for more than 6,000 deaths and damage totalling USD 2.2 billion (approximately PHP 95.5 billion), it is both the deadliest and most expensive storm in the Philippines' recent history.

The government response to Super Typhoon Yolanda highlighted many operational bottlenecks impacting humanitarian efforts in the Philippines. Since 2014, the World Food Programme (WFP) has been working with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Office of Civil Defense **to identify actions to address these logistical issues**. This case study summarizes the implementation of these actions in 2015–2017, as well as subsequent support WFP has provided to enhance the Government's disaster preparedness and response capacity in logistics and supply chain management.

2023

1 Disaster response centres

In the wake of Super Typhoon Yolanda, the Government and WFP agreed to improve national capacity to deliver humanitarian relief cargo, including but not limited to family food packs, to vulnerable and disaster-hit regions. Family food packs are among the first support items to be distributed to disaster-hit areas, where they ensure affected communities can still meet their essential food needs while food supplies and prices remain unstable.

Improving government capacity to distribute these packs required the use of several disaster response centres capable of procuring, assembling, storing and delivering them quickly and efficiently. These response centres also are used as preparedness and response hubs, storage locations for other relief cargo such as hygiene kits, and training facilities, among other uses.

Between 2015 and 2016, after a two-year development period, the Government and WFP established two disaster response centres capable of producing family food packs in Luzon and the Visayas. Locations were strategically chosen based on their proximity to land, sea and air transport links. The Visayas centre was established in Cebu City with the lease of a 5,000 m2 warehouse from WFP.

2 Mechanized packing systems

The Government, with technical assistance from WFP, also boosted the operational efficiency of family food pack production by introducing a mechanized packing system, the first of its kind in the Philippines, in the National Resource Operation Center (NROC) in Manila. WFP contributed USD 2.3 million invested in the mechanisation system. The system, which includes automatic case erectors, sealers and bagging machines, enables NROC to produce between 15,000 to 18,000 family food packs in an 8-hour shift – enough packs to feed 90,000 people for up to 72 hours. Since its installation in 2015, the mechanized packing system has increased NROC output of family food packs by 43 per cent and reduced the use of manual assembly by 87 per cent. In 2021, NROC produced a record 976,231 packs.

The scale of production enabled by mechanized packing allows the Government to stockpile and pre-position packs throughout the country in regions that might be affected by disasters, thereby reducing delivery times once disasters occur. Mechanized packing has also allowed the Government to expand the use of the packs beyond disaster response into social protection programmes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, family food packs were given to those who were unemployed or unable to work due to **quarantines or other social restrictions**.

To compliment increased production, NROC, with technical assistance from WFP, has strengthened storage and handling capacities with the installation of pallet-racking systems and hermetic storage units. To support this, WFP is also providing technical training on this new infrastructure for DSWD staff. Following the successful installation of a mechanized packing system in NROC, DSWD requested that future disaster response centres include the same level of automation.

Figure 1: NROC by the numbers.

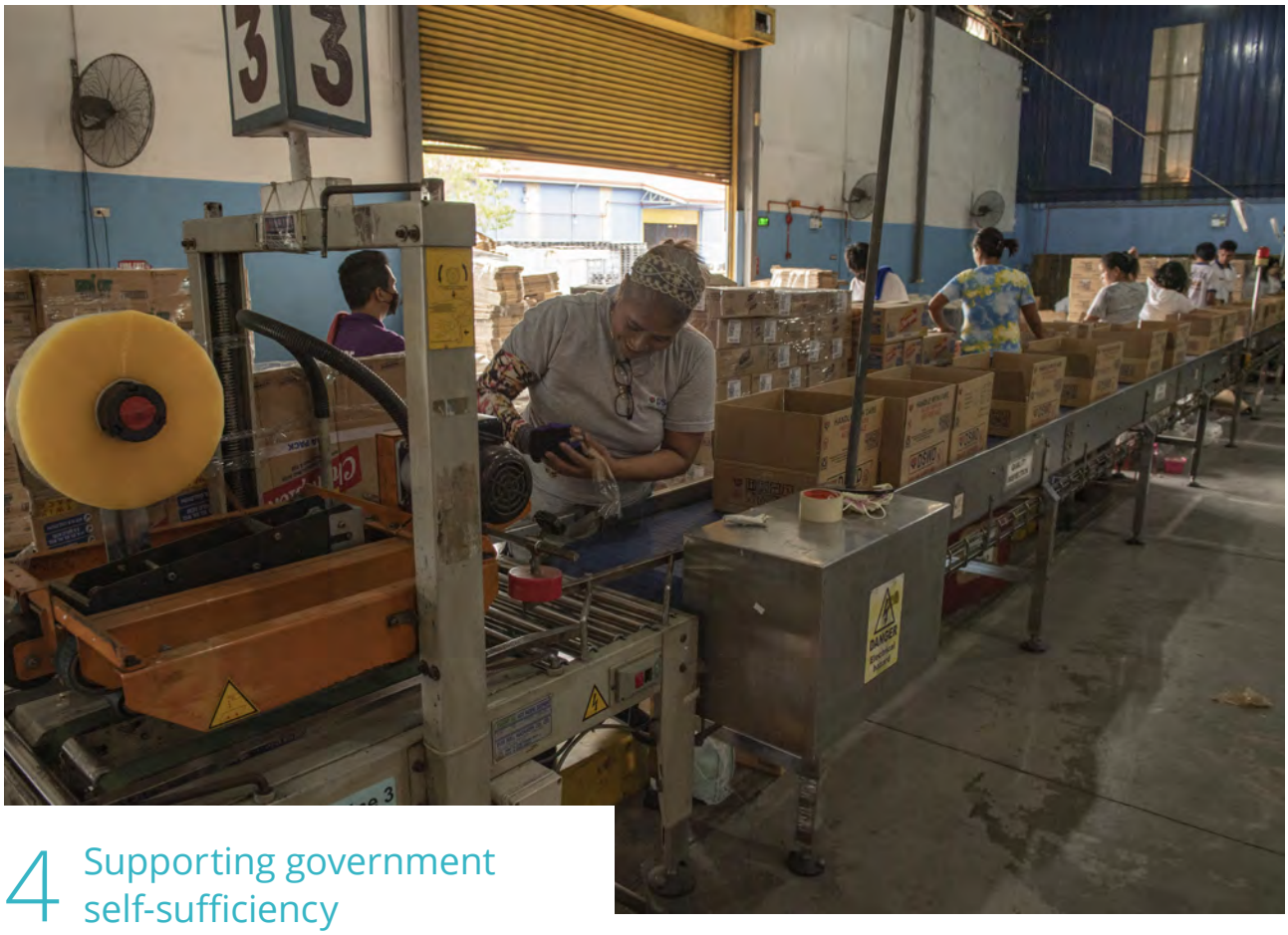
18,000 *family food packs*
can be produced within 8-hour

43%
increase in the production of food packs since the modernisation

976,231
food packs produced in 2021

3 Improving the nutrition of the family food packs

As well as increasing the efficiency of family food pack production and distribution, WFP has also improved the nutritional value of the packs themselves. In 2015, it worked with the Food and Nutrition Research Institute and the National Nutrition Council to study the nutritional content of the packs. Their findings ultimately led DSWD to issue **Administrative Order 02, series of 2021**, regulating the inclusion of iron-fortified rice in the food packs to help tackle malnutrition and anaemia. However, the order still needs to be implemented and iron-fortified rice has not yet been purchased for the packs.



4 Supporting government self-sufficiency

To strengthen government ownership and the sustainability of the new disaster response centres, WFP has collaborated closely with government partners to develop and deliver continuous training modules on disaster response logistics, supply chain management, equipment operationalization and response options. In 2019, a training package on emergency logistics operations was handed over to DSWD to meet their training needs. An estimated 200 people have benefited from these training modules. Today, the disaster response centres are fully self-sufficient as DSWD funds all operational, maintenance and upgrade costs related to the packing facilities.

The benefits of this self-sufficiency can be seen in the Visayas disaster response centre. The centre's newly installed mechanized packing system was officially handed over from WFP to DSWD in April 2016, but was out of operation from 2018 until 2021 due to limited funds and the relocation of the centre to Mandaue City. Although unfortunate, this setback demonstrated the ability of the DSWD to restart packing facilities with their own capital, and without any assistance from WFP. This highlights the Government's internal capacity and commitment to self-sustainability. By 2022, the Visayas system could match NROC's output.

5 Ready for the next emergency

WFP continues to coordinate with national, regional, provincial and municipal government agencies to deliver fast, efficient and effective logistical support in emergencies. It was one of the first organizations to respond to Super Typhoon Odette in 2021, delivering nearly 100,000 family food packs in the first week following the storm.

WFP has signed a new and updated memorandum of understanding with DSWD to collaborate further on logistics management. As part of this agreement, WFP committed to supplying logistical support, including the transport of relief items and equipment, as well as providing physical items such as generators, mobile storage units and prefabricated offices.

6 Success factors for mechanized packing systems

- **Efficient, cost saving and sustainable**
- **Prepositioning of family food packs before an emergency, leading to faster response**
- **Providing a solution to a pre-identified gap in response**
- **Government buy-in and investment to sustain long-term production**
- **Flexible funding to allow resources to be transferred from one activity to another**

This case study was developed under the 2022 Decentralised Evaluation on Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) Activities in the Philippines. To access the full report click here or contact wfp.philippines@wfp.org