



## **Final Report on Distribution of Water-Survival Box Aid**

Eastern Visayas, Philippines  
December 3, 2020

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## I. Introduction

### Background of the Disaster

On the afternoon of December 24, 2019, Typhoon Phanfone made landfall in the Eastern Visayas region of the Philippines. The Christmas storm brought torrential rains, sustained winds of 93 miles per hour, wind gusts up to 121 miles per hour, flooding, and power outages that continued



*Typhoon Phanfone caused extensive damage in the Eastern Visayas region of the Philippines*

for days in the more remote and rural areas. Equivalent to a category-2 hurricane, Phanfone affected more than 3.2 million people, displaced 145,000, injured 143 and resulted in at least 57 deaths. The heavy rains and strong winds damaged some 530,000 homes and 32 health facilities. Furthermore, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that the damage to infrastructure and agriculture is valued at \$67 million.

**Rotary International and Water Survival Box Limited's generous support** bolstered our Typhoon Phanfone response which ultimately reached some 3,990 men, women and children by helping us provide 300 households with clean water and other supplies.

### *Providing Relief Supplies and Medical Consumables*

International Medical Corps worked closely with the Department of Health and local partners to identify, procure, transport and distribute supplies for the most vulnerable, including households with pregnant women, families with a child less than one year old, and elderly individuals. We procured and distributed 153 blankets reaching a variety of locations in the Phanfone-impacted areas. In addition, International Medical Corps coordinated closely with health facilities to provide 600 wound-care kits with bandages, gauze, and more to support the prevention and treatment of infections while also ensuring uninterrupted access to health care.

### *Improved Access to Clean Water and Safe Hygiene*

The increase of standing water from flooding and heavy rains after a storm like Typhoon Phanfone, combined with already-existing open defecation practices, results in an increased risk for water-borne and vector-borne diseases like malaria and diarrhea — illnesses that can have a far greater impact than the storm itself. To address these concerns – alongside addressing gaps for future recurrent major storms in the Philippines, we distributed 378 household hygiene kits with items like soap, shampoo, buckets and toothbrushes, as well as COVID-19 supplies including washable face masks and 500ml isopropyl alcohol. Rotary International and Water Survival Box Limited's donation of 300 Water-Survival Boxes supported our activities and helped ensure families have the tools they need for access to clean water, safe personal hygiene and more.

## Partnering with Rotary International and Water Survival Box Limited

In response to the devastating typhoon, **Rotary International and Water Survival Box Limited** collaborated with International Medical Corps to donate 300 standard Water-Survival Boxes providing critically-needed water, sanitation and hygiene support, in the Eastern Visayas region of the Philippines. The Water-Survival Boxes contained other essential items, like kitchen utensils and construction materials, which helped families recover and rebuild. Working with local Rural Health Units (RHU), International Medical Corps distributed the Water-Survival Boxes to families in Biliran, and Eastern and Western Samar provinces – the most devastated communities.

COVID-19 created a unique set of challenges for our team. The Philippines reported its first COVID-19 case in the City of Manila on January 30, 2020 and the first local transmission was reported on March 5, 2020. Since then cases have continued to increase; the country has reported 432,925 confirmed cases and 8,418 deaths as of December 1, 2020.<sup>1</sup> While the majority of COVID-19 cases are in the National Capital Region (NCR) where the City of Manila is located, mitigation measures were implemented country-wide restricting movement between provinces and limiting our team’s access to the typhoon-affected areas.

## Arrival of the Water-Survival Boxes

The Water-Survival Boxes arrived in the Philippines in February 2020, but were held in customs while our team filed the required duty exemption paperwork. While this process was underway, the Philippines reported its first case of local COVID-19 transmission and country-wide mitigation measures were soon implemented further delaying the collection of the water boxes. Over the next six months, our Manila-based team worked tirelessly to collect the necessary signatures from various parties including provincial authorities amid travel restrictions. We experienced further delays as government officials transitioned to working remotely causing significant lags in processing paperwork, responding to inquiries and providing feedback. The Water-Survival Boxes were released and collected by our team on September 25, 2020.



*Our team receiving the Water-Survival Boxes at the Americares warehouse in Manila*

## Local Needs Assessment

Following Typhoon Phanfone’s impact, International Medical Corps’ team in Manila immediately deployed to some of the most affected areas in Biliran and Eastern and Western Samar provinces to begin to meet the most urgent needs and address key gaps in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Initial reports noted gaps in access to clean water; appropriate sanitation management; and safe hygiene and relief supplies.

<sup>1</sup> <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

The municipal water system only serves 70%-80% of the population under the best conditions and was providing an inadequate supply even before the typhoon hit. After the storm, health authorities found that the water supply was even more limited than normal, several water points tested positive for E. coli bacteria, and other water sources looked murky and contaminated from the damaged water systems. Latrines also provided inadequate coverage prior to the storm: only 60%-80% in most communities and even less in the coastal areas. Families that do not have their own latrines share those of their neighbors or nearby relatives, or practiced open defecation, further exacerbating water contamination issues. The limited access and increased contamination of water after a disaster can result in illnesses that can do more damage than the initial storm itself, putting the health of families and communities at risk.

Additionally, as a result of the storm, families reported that they lost necessary household supplies to practice safe hygiene and provide for their families' basic needs, including kitchen utensils; cooking pans; hygiene materials, such as soap and toothbrushes; and personal property such as clothes, footwear, blankets and sleeping mats. Without these essential supplies, it is difficult for people to recover with dignity and maintain healthy habits that prevent the spread of disease.

Our team determined these vulnerable communities would benefit greatly from the Water-Survival Boxes.

## II. Organization of the Distribution

### Phase 1: Transporting and Storing the Water-Survival Boxes

On September 25, 2020, customs officials released the Water-Survival Boxes which were then transported to a warehouse in Manila. Our team secured the warehouse space by leveraging our relationship with Americares.

Through collaboration with the World Food Programme, our team arranged transport of the Water-Survival Boxes from Manila to the Eastern Visayas region using their network of trucks. After four days of travel, which included an island crossing, our team delivered 100 Water-Survival Boxes to Caibiran, Biliran on October 14<sup>th</sup>. The following day, deliveries were made to Basey, Western Samar in the morning and Balangkayan, Eastern Samar in the afternoon. International Medical Corps provided each of two locations with 100 water survival boxes. Strict curfews in the typhoon-affected provinces and a tropical depression threatened to disrupt our delivery plans, but luckily our team was spared any further delivery delays.



*The Water-Survival Boxes arrive in Balangkayan, Eastern Samar*

## Phase 2: Training the Distribution Team

COVID-19 limited our team's ability to move easily between Manila and the typhoon-affected areas and prevented large in-person training sessions for the distribution team. To conduct the necessary training under these conditions, we utilized the Grifaid Family Filter tutorial videos available online. Unreliable internet connectivity in the region prevented the distribution team from accessing the videos online so staff downloaded the tutorial videos and saved them on USB drives which we provided to the distribution team in early October while the Water-Survival Boxes were in transit.

Before distributions began, International Medical Corps worked with Rural Health Unit staff, with each RHU opening one water survival box. From there, our team provided a training on its use and oversaw each demonstration.

## Phase 3: Details of the Distribution Plan

We allocated 100 Water-Survival Boxes to each municipality: Caibiran, Biliran; Basey, Western Samar and Balangkayan, Eastern Samar. Our team worked with the local Rural Health Unit (RHU) in each municipality to identify recipients and distribute the Water-Survival Boxes. We developed a set of parameters to help guide the distribution efforts, prioritizing households most impacted by the typhoon – those whose houses were either partially or totally destroyed – with an emphasis on households with pregnant women, families with a child less than one year old, and elderly individuals. Each household received one Water-Survival Box.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the RHU teams adapted plans and conducted home visits to distribute and properly train recipients on the water filter. Our team allocated eight business days to complete distributions in each municipality.

## Phase 4: Distribution of the Water-Survival Boxes

International Medical Corps completed the distribution of the 300 Water-Survival Boxes donated by Rotary International in the Typhoon Phanfone-affected Eastern Visayas region on October 21.



*An RHU nurse demonstrates how to use the water filter in Basey, Western Samar*

The distribution teams, comprised of the RHU Sanitary Inspector and nurses, sanitized the Water-Survival Boxes before distributions began. Distributions were primarily conducted through house-to-house visits, although some areas allowed small group gatherings. Each recipient household received an in-person demonstration on the use of the water filter.

Distributions in each municipality took between three and five days to complete.

International Medical Corps ultimately provided 300 households – approximately 1,500 men, women and children – with access to safe water for years to come through the distribution of the Water-Survival Boxes.

### III. Feedback

#### Community Feedback

The Easter Visayas region has been impacted by numerous typhoons, including Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 and Typhoon Phanfone in 2019. Each storm threatens to damage the already fragile water system. Recipients have expressed their gratitude for the Water-Survival Boxes, which ensure they have access to safe water for several years at no extra cost to them, equipping them to recover from future storms as well. It is important to note that in 2020, the Philippines has faced 21 major storms.

In addition to the water purification equipment, beneficiaries found the shelter and construction materials, such as the multi-tool, rope and tarpaulin, especially helpful given the damage their homes and other buildings sustain after storms like Typhoon Phanfone. In general, all feedback received from the recipients was positive. Everyone was grateful and appreciative for the Water-Survival Boxes.

#### Logistics Feedback

For future donations, having the original shipping documents in advance of the shipment's arrival helps expedite the customs clearance process and allows our team to file the necessary paperwork to ensure the shipment's timely collection.

Additionally, the Philippines has a strict time frame in which cargo needs to be collected. Failure to do so within seven days results in the cargo being declared abandoned, furthering complicating the collection process. Ensuring that the carrier notifies the receiving party immediately upon arrival of the cargo can prevent costly and timely delays. **At the same time, we are grateful for the flexibility from Rotary International and Water Survival Box Limited given the unanticipated challenges to enable our teams to have the time to provide the water boxes, which remained critical.**

#### Distribution Evaluation

COVID-19 provided unique challenges for distributing the Water-Survival Boxes. Our team overcame some of the challenges by implementing the following activities:

- Utilizing readily available tutorial videos for training the distribution team;
- Cleaning the Water-Survival Boxes with disinfectant before bringing them out into the community for distribution
- Conducting home visits to distribute the Water-Survival Boxes to beneficiaries; and,
- Distributing other materials, including hygiene kits, in conjunction with the Water-Survival Boxes to limit interactions with community members.
- Ensuring compliance to quarantine restrictions of each municipalities so that we are able to distribute the kits without delay

## Case Studies

### Case Study 1: Basey, Western Samar

Name	Fe Pecardal
Age	52
Family Size	Two
Effects of the Typhoon	Their house was damaged by the typhoon, and until now they have not fixed it yet fixed due to budget constraints.
How did the Box help	“It is such a big help because the items inside are really useful to me and my daughter for our daily needs. Now I do not have to purchase water from the water station anymore. That will save me some money too. Before, we borrowed most of these items from our neighbors.”
Best Item	“All of the contents are really essential to us, especially the water filter.”
Anything not used	No
Additional requests	“Blood pressure monitor, thermometer and glucometer, would be helpful to us. But what is given here is really good enough.”

### Case Study 2: Basey, Western Samar

Name	Lyann Elisan
Age	40
Family Size	Six
Effects of the Typhoon	House was severely damage. They lost all appliances and were forced to evacuate during the typhoon.
How did the Box help	“The box and its contents are a very big help to us. Before, we had to restrict our use of water, as one container cost 25 pesos (\$.50). With this, we no longer need to buy water or restrict the use of water to drinking. The tools will be used on our nitty gritties and my husband can now do the repairs work instead of hiring as now we already have these tools.”
Best Item	Everything they need is in the box. “The rope is useful as we can now readily tie the roof whenever a storm comes so it won’t be blown away. Lastly, the tarpaulin will be used as a mat when they have to

	evacuate from the house again, when a typhoon arrives.”
Anything not used	No
Additional requests	None

*Case Study 3: Balangkayan, Eastern Samar*

Name	Aida Stelle Joy Canales
Age	18
Family Size	Four
Effects of the Typhoon	Their house was washed out by typhoon. They had to evacuate as they live near the sea.
How did the Box help	The Box is very useful as they need these supplies in their day-to-day life, but they do not have the capacity to buy such on their own.
Best Item	They began using the Box contents immediately. They found the solar lantern especially helpful during a brownout.
Anything not used	No
Additional requests	“A bolo, machete and mattock will further help us in rebuilding our house.”

**IV. Additional Photos**



*In Balangkayan, Eastern Samar, an RHU team member hosts a group demonstration (left) and a family uses their new water filter (right)*



## V. Video Clips

Video clips and additional photos can be found at the links below:

<https://imc.canto.com/b/JM2AC>

<https://imc.canto.com/b/NT6PR>

## VI. Map



*Map showing the Typhoon Phanfone-affected population including in Biliara and Eastern and Western Samar, from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*

## VII. Conclusions

**Our team thanks Rotary International and Water Survival Box Limited for being a key part of International Medical Corps' Typhoon Phanfone response efforts in the Philippines.** Your support has provided some 1,500 men, women and children with safe water and other essential supplies.

We are grateful for **Rotary International and Water Survival Box Limited's** support of our response and recovery efforts in the Philippines and look forward to your continued support of our mission.