MANILA, Philippines ¦ 15 November 2013 – The World Health Organization (WHO) is working with the government of the **Philippines** and international partners to reach survivors of **Typhoon Haiyan** who need medical care. The full extent of the disaster is becoming increasingly clear, with dozens of separate sites needing assistance.

At least seven provinces have been hit by the disaster (Samar, Leyte, Cebu, Iloilo, Capiz, Aklan and Palawan) and a humanitarian hub is being established in each. But the scope of the disaster could be larger still. There are concerns that some 20 smaller islands with remote communities may have been impacted by the typhoon as well. This makes delivering relief exceedingly complicated.

“Because of the geography of the Philippines—an archipelago of many islands—and the fact that so many have been hit by the typhoon, it is essentially like mounting at least seven separate, simultaneous relief efforts. This multiplies the logistical challenges associated with the response,” says Dr Julie Hall, WHO’s Representative in the Philippines.

Health infrastructure—including the “cold chain” which is vital for safe storage and transportation of vaccines—has been severely damaged by the typhoon. Initial assessments have found that 18 of the 38 health facilities in affected regions are not functional.

Aid is beginning to reach those in need. A total of 22 Filipino medical teams have been deployed to typhoon-affected areas. For example, the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center—the only local health facility remaining operational in Tacloban—is being manned by teams from Metro Manila Hospitals. In addition, 11 foreign medical teams are operational in areas including Tacloban, Ormoc City, Panay, Guiuan and Palo, and another 14 foreign teams are on their way. WHO has teams on location in Tacloban and Cebu, coordinating the actions of foreign medical teams. Around 50 WHO experts have come to the Philippines to support government efforts, in excess of the staff who were already in country prior to the typhoon.

There are estimated to be more than 200 000 pregnant women and 130 000 breastfeeding women in affected areas in need specialized prenatal, postnatal, child health, health promotion and family planning services.

Guiuan is one of the hardest-hit areas, with every health facility destroyed, including the only facility in Eastern Samar province with capacity to help women with complications of child birth. However, reproductive health kits have been sent to Guiuan to treat patients with obstetric complications. A generator, a refrigerator to store medicines, a delivery bed, midwifery kits and hygiene kits have also been sent.

Some 1350 hygiene and dignity kits (containing items such as soap, sanitary napkins, toilet

paper and underpants) have arrived in Tacloban City for distribution to pregnant and breastfeeding women.