

UK medical team off to Philippines



HMS Daring, which is to be deployed to the Philippines to help the millions of people affected by the devastating typhoon

A team of British medical experts and the first consignment of UK aid will leave shortly for the disaster-hit Philippines, David Cameron has said.

The Prime Minister said the scenes of devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan were "heart-breaking" as he announced that a 12-strong team of paramedics and surgeons would help the relief effort.

The Government has already committed a total of £10 million in aid, with a Royal Navy warship and an RAF transport aircraft helping the recovery effort.

Welcoming the urgent appeal launched by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), Mr Cameron said: "We've all seen the appalling devastation wrought by Typhoon Haiyan, with heart-breaking scenes played across our TV screens.

"Today's Disasters Emergency Committee appeal launch is a vital step to ensure aid agencies can provide essential relief to those most affected by this unprecedented disaster.

"Yesterday I announced Britain would increase its contribution to £10 million and send HMS Daring and an RAF C-17 to the area to support the relief operation. A 12-strong team of British surgeons and paramedics and the first cargo of UK aid will depart for the region very shortly.

"I am proud that the British public have always shown an unfailing generosity for helping those in need and I know their response to this appeal will be no different."

The UK support will provide aid flights to Cebu in the eastern Philippines to deliver forklift trucks, cutting equipment, 4x4s and other kit to help clear and reopen runways and roads.

It will enable the delivery of life-saving supplies such as temporary shelters, blankets and water purification tablets to 300,000 people.

Buckets, soap and sanitary items will also be sent in a bid to prevent the spread of disease.

International Development Secretary Justine Greening said: "The scenes of utter devastation in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan are shocking in their scale and we know that the survivors, especially

vulnerable children and women, now face a grim and uncertain future.

"Britain is determined to stand by the Philippines and we have now pledged a total of £10 million to get 800,000 people the food, water and shelter they urgently need."

Aid organisations warned they were being hampered by widespread devastation as Save the Children said it was helping survivors who were having to cope with the "worst possible conditions".

Lynette Lim, of Save the Children, said: "We are working round the clock to offer the basic life essentials to the 4.3 million people we estimate are affected.

"We are witnessing the complete devastation of a city. In Tacloban everything is flattened. Bodies litter the street, many, many of which are children. From what I saw, two out of every five bodies was that of a child.

"Children are particularly vulnerable in disasters. We fear for how many children have been washed away in floods, crushed under falling buildings and injured by flying debris. Many are separated from their families amid the devastation, and all are in desperate need of food, water and shelter."

Handicap International said it was sending a team of emergency specialists to support the organisation's staff already working in the country. These specialists will help the most vulnerable individuals, such as people with disabilities, older people and children.

"The devastation is worse than in Bandah Aceh, Indonesia, following the 2004 tsunami," said Edith van Wijngaarden, the charity's programme director in the Philippines.

"I'm particularly worried about the most vulnerable individuals. When nothing is left standing and the local infrastructure has been destroyed, people with disabilities, older people and children are particularly vulnerable."

Tim Harding, from Sunderland, said he was one of many foreigners who were volunteering at a Manila Red Cross centre.

Mr Harding said he had planned to have a holiday with his wife, who is originally from the Philippines, but it had instead become a volunteer mission.

"It's good to see everyone getting on, doing a job where race, nationality, income level, nothing matters at all," he said.

"There's only one priority here and that's to get together, get stuck in and do the greater good."

Mr Harding said he would help wherever he could for the next few weeks, a mindset shared by other foreigners hailing from not only the UK, but elsewhere in Europe and the world.

"There's a lot of panic going on here," he said. "Although we just got some good news a few minutes ago that a three-year-old child had actually been rescued in the debris at a place in Tacloban city. There

was a big cheer that went up."

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