

## Media Release

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Philippines: More than a million children missing out on education as thousands of schools remain shut following “super” Typhoon Mangkhut**

More than a million students face an extended period out of school, leaving them at risk of falling permanently out of the education system, warns Save the Children as the cleanup after Typhoon Mangkhut gets under way.

The storm, classified as a category 5 “super” typhoon, ripped across northern Luzon in the Philippines on Saturday morning, causing major damage to homes, schools and vital infrastructure. So far at least 66 people have been killed, while dozens are still missing.

According to the Department of Education, more than 4,300 schools remain suspended because of damage caused by the storm or the ongoing use of classrooms as evacuation centres, affecting just over one million students. At least 170 schools suffered flooding, while nearly 2,000 classrooms were either totally destroyed or suffered varying levels of damage.

“We’re really concerned about the long-term impact of the typhoon on children, particularly those who aren’t able to go back to school. Hundreds of classrooms have been totally destroyed. Some had roofs ripped from their foundations while others were crushed by falling trees,” Save the Children’s Jerome Balinton said from Tuguegarao City in northern Luzon.

“It will be a huge task to clear the rubble and repair or rebuild classrooms, not to mention replacing damaged tables and chairs, and learning materials that perished in the storm.”

The Government of the Philippines is leading the humanitarian response and working with aid agencies to meet the needs of affected communities. The government also led large-scale evacuations prior to the typhoon making landfall, which undoubtedly saved lives.

Mr Balinton said it was crucial that aid agencies and government departments included education among their top priorities in the humanitarian response.

“Sadly we know that the longer a child is out of school, the less likely it is that they’ll ever go back. This means that alongside the provision of life-saving food, shelter and medical support, it’s vital that there is a strong focus on getting children back to the classroom as quickly as possible,” he said.

“Not only is it critical for children’s future learning, but school also provides a sense of routine and comfort in times of disaster. It’s a safe space for students, and somewhere they can be with their friends and forget about the frightening ordeal they have been through.

Large swathes of farmland have also been destroyed, leaving thousands of farmers – often among the poorest members of society in the Philippines – in financial peril. Half the population in typhoon affected areas rely on agriculture for a living. This also comes at a time when the nation is already coping with rice shortages and its highest inflation levels since 2009.

“It is critical that support is also provided to those who lost their livelihoods, particularly those relying on agriculture for a living. Farmers we spoke to lost their entire crops of corn and rice, which were due for harvest in about two months,” Mr Balinton said.

“This can create a spiral of debt as farmers, often already having borrowed money to buy seeds and other expenses, are forced to borrow more to make up for crop loss and be able to feed their families. Sometimes in these situations we see parents taking their children out of school because they can no longer afford the tuition fees, or so the children can work to support their family.”

Save the Children will begin distributing aid to 800 of the worst-affected families tomorrow, including hygiene items like shampoo, soap and cleaning products, as well as jerry cans, water purification tablets, pots and pans for cooking and plastic sheeting for temporary shelter.

The aid agency’s response will also include helping children get back to school quickly, as well as providing livelihood support to farmers who suffered major crop loss. Save the Children has a long history of responding to typhoons and other disasters in the Philippines, including Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, Typhoon Koppu in 2015 and Typhoon Haima in 2016.

## **ENDS**

### **About Save the Children**

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In New Zealand and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children’s unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

### **To arrange interviews, please contact:**

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