3. Strengthening National Emergency Medical Teams as a cornerstone for disaster preparedness in the Philippines

In November 2013, one of the most powerful typhoons ever recorded struck the Philippines, claiming more than 6000 lives and causing billions of dollars in damages. While the Philippines faces several natural disasters every year and is ranked as the third most disaster-prone country in the world in the World Risk Report 2016, Typhoon Haiyan, known locally as Yolanda, changed profoundly how the country deals with disasters and health emergencies.

Based on the lessons from past disasters, and as a priority activity of the Western Pacific Regional Framework for Action for Disaster Risk Management for Health, the Philippines has established mechanisms to provide immediate and appropriate health services during disasters and emergencies. One such initiative is the development of the National Emergency Medical Teams (NEMTs) as surge capacity to support disaster response at the local level.

NEMTs in the Philippines are aligned with the WHO EMT Initiative that places a strong focus on helping every country develop its own EMTs that can respond to disasters and emergencies on short notice.

NEMTs will undergo the WHO verification process. WHO supports Philippine authorities through the peer review process that leads to a quality assurance designation and classification. The goal is to enable the deployment of EMTs in a more systematic, timely and predictable manner. The establishment of NEMTs will allow the Philippines to respond more quickly and effectively to disasters and emergencies, providing essential health services and safeguarding the health of the people in affected areas.

The Philippines has established the National Emergency Medical Teams to provide immediate and appropriate health services to people during disasters and emergencies.