

Opening Remarks

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The Asian Century

1. This century has been heralded “The Asian Century.” Indeed, there is much to celebrate in the Asia region with its miraculous economic growth.
2. *But*, all of us are keenly aware that the challenges of poverty and under nutrition stubbornly remain.
3. Asia is also exposed to more natural disasters than anywhere else in the world. These disasters are increasing in frequency, magnitude and intensity like the floods we saw in Pakistan, for the third consecutive year, and more recently the Typhoon Bopha in the Philippines last December.
4. The twin threat of malnutrition and natural disasters in the region has compelled us to re-assess how WFP can maximise our impact.
5. As such, in 2013, the Asia Bureau is focusing on **two** concrete initiatives for the region. And I will focus today’s presentation just on these two points.

Preparedness

6. **Our first initiative deals with preparedness** and our ability to respond and shift resources when an emergency strikes.
7. To bring this point home, I would like to show a 2 minutes video of Davao, Mindanao in the Philippines, which was hit by Typhoon Bopha, last December.

[SHOW VIDEO – has no sound track, and I will talk over it]

8. I visited this very area showing on the video just one week ago.

9. This was a typhoon that killed more than 1,000 people, left some 30,000 people in evacuation centers and almost 1 million living in the ruins of their homes in open areas, or living with host communities.
 10. This was a natural disaster that saw very little media coverage even though it was a Category 5 super typhoon, and one which saw limited donor response in general, in spite of the government's appeal for international assistance.
 11. My point is – whether you see all of them on TV or not, this is just one of the many natural disasters that strikes the Asia region, year after year.
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12. Which brings me back to our regional preparedness strategy.
 13. A key component of our regional emergency preparedness strategy is to establish a response plan that can be used by national and international responders in the event of a large-scale natural disaster.
 14. We have looked at the highest risk countries together with OCHA, and prioritised the five that are in Asia -- Bangladesh and Nepal in South Asia; and, Indonesia, Philippines and Myanmar, in Southeast Asia.
 15. Our multi-disciplinary missions have completed assessments in the event of a cyclone in Bangladesh, earthquake in the Kathmandu valley in Nepal, and an earthquake-triggered tsunami in two regions of Indonesia (one in the northern island of Sumatra; and, another in Java, the other main island in the south) We will start assessments in Myanmar and the Philippines this year.
 16. Our missions have identified potential locations that could serve as inter-agency 'staging areas' for a large-scale response operation. These plans are being shared with national authorities, regional responders such as ASEAN, military, and with UN system agencies and NGOs in an effort to align the logistics component of an eventual response.

17. Several countries in Asia such as Indonesia and the Philippines already have strong response capacity. As such, WFP is working with these governments to further enhance their preparedness for future disasters using simulations and logistics training.

Nutrition

18. **The second is on a regional nutrition initiative** – While the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement has been quite successful in advocating the importance of first 1,000 days for curtailing stunting, we do not see yet, programmes of significant scale addressing the issue. We have started working with UNICEF on developing pilot programmes focusing on prevention of stunting to be implemented in two or three countries.
19. Outcomes from these pilot programmes, hopefully will eventually be used to inform and influence government policies and programmes in the region. However, it will require some years to see evidence in the case of measuring reduction of stunting. And for this reason, part of this regional initiative will see an investment in a more robust outcome measurement system to conduct nutritional surveillance in the region. (working with one or two key research institutions such as the Centres of Disease Control (CDC) or Epicentre)
20. More broadly, over the past one year, the Regional Directors of UNICEF, FAO, WHO and WFP in Asia, have jointly travelled and spoken at Ministerial level nutrition focused conferences in several countries. We have been urging governments of countries with high malnutrition rates to recognise investments in nutrition as an investment in their country's future. And, we are asking them to consider re-investing part of their economic growth of Asia in reducing under-nutrition through nutrition sensitive social protection schemes.