

From VOA Learning English this is As It Is.

Welcome back. I'm Caty Weaver.

Thousands of people continue to flee the central Philippines after much of the area was heavily damaged by a powerful storm in early November.

Philippine social services are concerned about the possible mistreatment of people leaving the area -- people who have already lost so much. Today on the program we report on efforts to protect these typhoon survivors from human trafficking and other abuses.

Then, we go to Pakistan to find out why a Christian-run medical center that has cared for the poor and disabled for 50 years is closing.

## **Social Service Agencies Work to Protect Typhoon Victims**

In Manila, aid agencies are trying to care for the thousands of people displaced by Typhoon Haiyan. The agencies say they are worried that some of the survivors could become victims of another disaster. They say these desperate people are likely targets of the human trafficking trade. Christopher Cruise reports.

A social worker called out directions for food service for people who have recently arrived at Villamor Air Base. After the typhoon victims eat, they give their names to the Social Welfare and Development Department. Foilan Maglaya is a specialist with the department.

“We have to ensure that the children with the families is their real child because we want to prevent human trafficking, child trafficking. We don’t want women to end up with traffickers.”

Social welfare officials say they have not found any trafficking cases so far. But, they say people living near the base ask them every day if they can employ home workers from among those who are displaced. Social Welfare Officer Doan Foronda says they don’t think the refugees should take the jobs being offered.

“We just discouraged them because right now being household help is not the most appropriate employment for the survivors because they need to be debriefed. They need to be attended to psychologically because they went through so much trauma. So they need to be well before they can be employed again.”

The displaced arrive in Villamor on military planes from the city of Tacloban, the city hardest-hit by Typhoon Haiyan. The typhoon also caused a huge flood of ocean water in nearby coastal towns in Leyte province. It was like a tsunami. Thousands were killed in the flooding. The typhoon’s powerful winds also destroyed towns in nearby Samar province.

The United Nations Children’s Fund -- UNICEF -- is working with local officials in the most-affected areas to find children who might be alone. Sarah Norton-Stahl is UNICEF’s Manila Child Protection Chief. She says there are some reports of children whose parents died, but officials do not know how many of these children there are.

Ms. Norton-Stahl says in past disasters they have seen a ten percent increase in child trafficking.

“It’s really just because of the destruction of services. The local capacity to handle these cases is diminished and people’s livelihoods that have been affected put them at greater risk, greater vulnerability for trafficking.”

She says UNICEF is training local government officials and other social workers on ways to reunite families, including using a mobile registration system for children. She says there is clear understanding among the officials and workers of the possibility of trafficking. She says many people attend the training.

Foilan Maglaya of the Social Welfare and Development Department says officials are also talking with typhoon survivors about trafficking. He says warnings about traffickers are repeatedly broadcast at the air base in the local language.

I’m Christopher Cruise.

## **A Hospice for the Disabled Poor in Pakistan**

Now we return to Caty Weaver, who tells us about the problems of a Christian home for the sick in the crowded Pakistani city of Rawalpindi.

For fifty years, Irish religious workers have operated a small medical center in the northwestern city of Rawalpindi. St. Joseph's Hospice cares for the poor and the disabled and those who were not accepted by other hospitals. But falling donations and rising costs are forcing the hospice to close.

"When I first came here, I couldn't do anything, now I can eat by myself and I can write. Everybody here loves me and takes care of me. I wasn't looked after like this in my own home."

That is Aisha Gulrehman. When she was 12 she was hit by a bullet in her neighborhood. The Christian hospice has been her home for ten years.

Like Aisha, all forty patients at the hospice are extremely poor. Some of the patients with spinal cord injuries had been left alone by their families and communities.

Sister Margaret Walsh and a team of Pakistani and international volunteers have been trying to keep St. Joseph's in operation. But the hospice is not getting enough donations. And financial manager Naveed Inderyas says fuel, electricity and medical costs are rising.

"According to our bank balances, we can survive only for the five months."

Many people believe Christians should raise the money for St. Joseph's. But the hospice cares for people of all religions, and its patients are mostly Muslim.

There are many aid organizations in Pakistan. But, Dr. Munawer Sher Khan says St. Joseph's is special. She is a Muslim who has been involved with the hospice for 40 years.

"There is no place to the best of my knowledge that helps the disabled, the chronically ill, they are rejected from other hospitals, they can't afford to go to hospitals, they can't afford expensive treatment."

Mohammad Sohail was a young man when he dove into a lake and hit his head on a rock. The accident left him unable to move from the neck down.

“I have no words to tell you but these people, especially hospice, they know what to do with me, dressings, food, a lot of other things, special needs for patients they provide us, and slowly, slowly, starting that day I did move my neck, my hand, my finger and now I am like a big man.”

Sadly, such success stories could soon be all in the past. The hospice will close if it does not get the financial support it needs. Dr. Munawer Sher Khan says she has a difficult time believing it will close.

“Why are we closing? Insufficient funds? People don’t care anymore? I care.”

Sister Margaret Walsh says she will fight to keep the hospice open. She says closing it would be too painful.

And that’s As It Is for today. I’m Caty Weaver. Thanks for joining us.