

# Programme Update



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Philippines

Appeal No. MAAPH001

31 December 2008

This report covers the period 1 July to 31 December  
2008

### In brief

**Programme(s) summary:** The 2008-2009 appeal to support the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) focuses on organizational development, with an emphasis on expanding its volunteer base throughout the country, as well as increasing its capacity in disaster management and health and care.

**Financial situation:** The total budget for 2008 is CHF 2,158,654 (USD 1.93 million or EUR 1.31 million). Unfortunately, there have been no contributions to this appeal to date, and therefore, no expenditure under this appeal. However, funding from the 2006 typhoon emergency appeal has contributed towards capacity building in disaster management. Additionally, on 24 June 2008, an emergency appeal for Typhoon Fengshen was launched, seeking CHF 1,996,287 (USD 1,878,149 or EUR 1,343,281) to assist 80,000 families for six months. To date, this appeal is 87 per cent covered.

### Context

The Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) is the largest voluntary humanitarian organization in the Philippines with a clearly defined authority and scope of multilateral humanitarian activities and social services in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable people. The society and its provincial chapters have extensive knowledge in relief and rehabilitation programmes in the wake of natural disasters, which occur regularly in the Philippines.

Typhoons are the largest killers in the Philippines, followed by earthquakes, volcanoes and floods. Typhoon deaths in the country total 28,812 with a total of USD5,653 million (CHF 6,085 million) in damages in the 20th century (World Bank and NDCC, 2004).

The PNRC, as an auxiliary to the government, has played an instrumental role in the disaster response. The enthusiastic outpouring of support from the national society's volunteers who play an essential role in

carrying out assessments and coordinating the distribution of relief items is recognized and respected nationally for its efforts in supporting those affected.

With the aid of its strong image and reputation in the area of humanitarian aid, the PNRC has developed good fundraising skills and received much international support in times of disasters. The leadership of the national society is very keen on maintaining the high profile of the PNRC, and constantly challenges its staff and volunteers to be more proactive, and to respond in more rapid, efficient and innovative ways. PNRC recognizes the need for a changed approach in order to have more impact on existing vulnerability in the remote *barangays* (villages). This draws on both local thinking and on the International Federation's global vision: striving through voluntary action for a world of empowered communities, better able to address human suffering and crises.

Given the additional risks triggered by climate change, this approach looks towards enhancing the skills and response time of the national society as a whole. Climate change looks set to affect the Philippines to a greater degree than it may other countries. Many of the 7,000 islands that constitute the country lie at only a few metres above sea level, meaning any rise in ocean levels would have a tremendous consequence for the country as a whole. The PNRC faces great challenges in serving an ever-growing population, a large portion of which is economically deprived.

Indeed, the country faces an increasing number of families that regularly experience hunger. The National Nutrition Council reports the re-emergence of severe malnutrition in addition to the existing high level of micro-nutrient deficiency which traditionally results in the widespread stunting of children of primary school age. A sharp increase in the price of rice, the main staple food in the Philippines, puts an additional burden on the poorest, which often reserve 80 per cent of all income for the purchase of basic food commodities.

It is well known that there are high levels of inequality in the distribution of resources and labour in the Philippines which result in factual limitations of access to education for many. There is an immense unemployment and more than 10 per cent of Filipinos are actually working abroad as overseas Filipino workers (OFW). Their remittances to their families in country are vital for many. Over the last six months, severe fluctuations in the USD/Peso exchange rate have significantly reduced the purchase power of many of the same families that are in the same time struggling to cope with the higher cost of rice and other food items.

Lack of access to safe land gives many families limited choice in terms of where to live. Increasing numbers of homeless and squatters add to high pre-existing numbers of multi-generational structural poor: children of today's homeless do not attend school and will not have the qualifications to have an adequate job themselves in the future. The probability is high that they will find themselves tomorrow in the same streets as their parents are today.

The government provides some support to those who lost their homes but is also limited in its capacity to assist as it is already focusing on the control of the price of rice and on the reconstruction of public infrastructure. The effect of renewed violence in Mindanao puts additional strain on already scarce government resources.

The national society also continues to support those impacted by three ongoing armed insurgencies in the country, mainly concentrated in Mindanao, located in the southern part of the country.

## Progress towards outcomes

Unfortunately, as there have been no funding contributions to the programmes outlined in the appeal for 2008, this programme update provides a general overview of the situation of PNRC, and especially of progress in organizational development, and specifically the progress of Project 143. Other activities in disaster management are reported in the operations updates for the Mileyno and Fengshen typhoon emergency appeals. A response operation held by the national society, supported by an emergency appeal launched by the International Federation, is currently ongoing, focussing on emergency shelter, water and sanitation, and health. The resources of the International Federation will again be drawn upon in supporting the national society with internationally recruited managers working closely to ensure that key personnel from the PNRC develop their skills and experience, which are subsequently shared widely through ongoing trainings.

## Outcome/Expected results

Volunteers are the engine that drives the PNRC. The national society has identified the need for even greater numbers at village level as a key priority in order to:

- Cope with the scale of emergency operations required to respond to the effects of climate change.
- Enable the national society to engage in badly needed preventive health initiatives at community level.

The ongoing Project 143 is a major thrust programme of the PNRC that aims to initiate, uphold and encourage the spirit of volunteerism at the smallest political unit in the country (the *barangay*), thereby delivering timely, effective and compassionate humanitarian assistance. Under this programme, the PNRC is identifying, recruiting, organizing, training and mobilizing volunteers at the community level for immediate response during disasters and emergencies, and it will assist the *barangay* to strengthen the capabilities of people in the community to handle and cope with disasters and emergencies through proper education and skills-training.

Indeed, having more volunteers on the periphery is a prerequisite for future community action at the *barangay* level. This explains the PNRC's decision to recruit up to 1.8 million volunteers by the end of 2009; this would mean 44 volunteers (composed of one team leader, nine volunteers focused on health, nine on disaster management and 25 on blood services) in each of the country's 42,000 *barangays*. The benefits of these volunteers being present, well-trained and motivated in appropriate services will be felt by every community in the Philippines. It is an extraordinary prospect that makes the most of the Red Cross' comparative advantage: local support and know-how linked into a network that has a global presence.

## Achievements

This ambitious initiative which takes into account the 42,000-plus *barangays* nationwide has resulted in the recruitment of more than 317,000 new volunteers over the year, currently covering around 17 per cent out of total number of targeted *barangays*.

This addition to the body of volunteers has shortened the national society's response time, especially on many of the islands and in remote villages. Good training and management of these volunteers is also certain to improve PNRC's impact on the general health of vulnerable communities. In support of this initiative, which already shows progress achieved, the International Federation continues to seek the much-needed support to ensure cost-effective training of present and future new volunteers, and to upgrade the PNRC's volunteer management systems and policies.

To keep the cost of the necessary training manageable, a menu of training kits was developed during the reporting period. These kits ensured simple, attractive and highly action-orientated training without creating a need for a large training caseload. Every kit will enable a volunteer to be trained within an hour, ready for community service concentrating on key life saving actions and messages. For instance, a malaria kit would explain that mosquitoes carry and spread the disease, and that they tend to breed in stagnant water. It would then guide the volunteer in the clean-up of such pools. All actions would contribute towards establishing a safer community, based on the Red Cross Red Crescent Fundamental Principles. This approach will provide volunteers with several meaningful activities per month, thus contributing to their activities within the community and indirectly to their retention as Red Cross volunteers.

## Constraints or Challenges

To date, response to the 2008-2009 appeal for the Philippines has received no support from donors. This may be partly due to the PNRC's rock-solid image working against its actual needs. Despite its perceived image, the national society is constantly seeking improvement in its organizational and volunteer development in order to maintain and enhance its service delivery. PNRC recognizes the need for a changed approach in order to have more impact on existing vulnerability in the remote *barangays*. This draws on both local thinking and on the International Federation's global vision: striving through voluntary action for a world of empowered communities, better able to address human suffering and crises.

While the national society receives generous multilateral funding support in its emergency response efforts, much less is received for support in capacity building.

The PNRC has recently been short-listed as one of the candidates for the Intensified Capacity Building (ICB) support. Acquiring the ICB support will enable it to address these constraints and to consolidate ongoing capacity building efforts.

The scope of the ongoing Project 143 poses a formidable challenge to balance fast recruitment with proportional levels of training and increases in the national society's volunteer management capacities.

## Contributing to longer-term impact

The next two years will be an exciting time for the PNRC and its partners. The national society seeks to establish a volunteer presence in every local community (*barangay*) in the country with a target of 1.8 million volunteers nationwide by the end of 2009, achieved via an ambitious recruitment scheme. The initiative, known as Project 143, is very much in line with the rationale of the Federation of the Future of scaling-up activities, building capacities and managing partnerships.

One may look upon Project 143 as a pilot project within the area of organizational development, a commitment towards improving Red Cross volunteer service impact on the ever-growing numbers of vulnerable families at all levels, be it natural disasters or the consequences of poverty.

## Looking ahead

The International Federation maintained this appeal despite the lack of funding response. The identified priority areas and actions of the PNRC in the given circumstances remain fragile, in that while communities are being served and the national society's role is being recognized, programming remains heavily reliant on international support. At the same time, there is little evidence to suggest major donor interest in the country, with the exception of relatively small project funds. Therefore, failure to secure continued support at this critical moment would mean certain core capacities would be lost. Further investment is required over the next few years to strengthen the capacities of the PNRC to increase its role in civil society and deliver on the Global Agenda goals.

How we work	
<p>The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".</p>	<p><b>Global Agenda Goals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.</li> <li>• Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.</li> <li>• Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.</li> <li>• Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.</li> </ul>
Contact information	
<p><b>For further information specifically related to this report, please contact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philippine National Red Cross: Corazon Alma De Leon, secretary-general; email: <a href="mailto:corazonalma.deleon@redcross.org.ph">corazonalma.deleon@redcross.org.ph</a>, <a href="mailto:pnrcnhq@redcross.org.ph">pnrcnhq@redcross.org.ph</a>; phone: +63.2.527.0854</li> <li>• Federation country office in Philippines: Roger Bracke, head of country office; email: <a href="mailto:roger.bracke@ifrc.org">roger.bracke@ifrc.org</a>; mobile: +63.917.880.6844; phone: +63.2.524.3151</li> <li>• Federation regional office, Bangkok: Alan Bradbury, head of regional office, email: <a href="mailto:alan.bradbury@ifrc.org">alan.bradbury@ifrc.org</a>; phone: +66 2 661 8201</li> <li>• Federation Asia Pacific zone office, Kuala Lumpur: Jagan Chapagain, deputy head of zone; email: <a href="mailto:jagan.chapagain@ifrc.org">jagan.chapagain@ifrc.org</a>; phone +603 9207 5700; fax: +603 2161 0670</li> <li>• For pledges of funding: Federation Asia Pacific zone office, Kuala Lumpur: Penny Elghady, coordinator of resource mobilization and planning monitoring evaluation &amp; reporting; email: <a href="mailto:penny.elghady@ifrc.org">penny.elghady@ifrc.org</a>; phone +603 9207 5775. Please send pledges to <a href="mailto:zonerm.asiapacific@ifrc.org">zonerm.asiapacific@ifrc.org</a></li> </ul>	