

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

PHILIPPINES: LANDSLIDES AND FLOODS

23 December 2003

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Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: CHF 50,000

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 180 countries.

For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

This document is being issued reflecting the situation at this time, and Red Cross and Red Crescent action described below. A DREF allocation of CHF 50,000 has been released. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider international support through an appeal, subject to receiving a request from the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) to this effect.

The Situation

The Philippine Government has requested international assistance following a devastating series of floods since mid-December – which have also triggered fatal landslides – affecting almost 100,000 people in eight provinces across central and southern areas of the country according to latest estimates, with more than 100 deaths and a further 93 missing. Worryingly, more bad weather is forecast, which could add significantly to the misery of those already left homeless, injured or bereaved.

Damage to agriculture, fisheries and infrastructure has been considerable – including bridges, roads and seawalls – with a preliminary assessment putting economic losses in the region of USD 2.7 million.

Particularly hard hit has been Leyte Island in central eastern Philippines, where the vast majority of the deaths have occurred due to landslides following heavy rains and a tornado. In Punta San Francisco (pop 500), 68 bodies have been recovered, with another 35 missing; only three houses have been left standing. In the town of Pinut-an, struck by two landslides on Friday 19 December, hardly a house has been left untouched, with 126 totally destroyed. Survivors among the townspeople of 1,000 families are now taking shelter in the local school.

Even five days after the disaster, information from the affected zone remains sketchy and anecdotal, due to the remoteness of the affected area, exacerbated by difficulties of access and communications. It is already clear, however, that even when immediate needs are met – including food, shelter, medicaments etc – the overall outlook for a local population already eking out a marginal existence is not encouraging.

On the island of Mindanao, where 13 people have been killed by flash floods, people are starting to return home as the floods recede, though rain is still reported to be falling.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

As indicated in Information Bulletin No 1 (issued 22 December 2003), PNRC staff and volunteers both at headquarters and chapter level went quickly into action, linking, as auxiliary to the Philippine Government, with the national disaster coordinating council (NDCC), releasing supplies, assisting with the rescue effort and tending to the needs of survivors through relief distributions.

On Mindanao, the PNRC is providing food to 351 families and is assisting more than 400 of the 960 affected families on Leyte. An assessment team was despatched from Manila yesterday (Monday) to Leyte to conduct an assessment of immediate and longer term needs of the affected population and their report is expected later this week. PNRC headquarters is maintaining 24 hour monitoring of the emerging situation, ready to act as events unfold, together with the society's extensive and experienced nationwide chapter network. Direct offers of support have been received, inter alia, from the US and Australian governments and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The International Federation has released CHF 50,000 from its DREF and a much needed cash transfer was made from the Bangkok regional delegation to the PNRC earlier today (Tuesday). The regional delegation is maintaining a disaster management team on standby over the holiday season, ready to respond in the event that the PNRC request international assistance through an appeal. A number of donors have been in touch with the Federation since the weekend, with firm offers of assistance and/or seeking information, including the Belgian and Danish Red Cross societies. Since the disaster struck, there have been three updates posted on the Federation's DMIS (disaster management information system) site, two web stories and two information bulletins.

For further details please contact:

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.