

# Information bulletin



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Philippines: Flash floods

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This bulletin is being issued for information only. A cold front and continuous rains from 7-12 January 2009 caused flash floods, landslides, and sea surges in large areas of the country, affecting some 329,045<sup>1</sup> people. The Philippine National Red Cross Society (PNRCS), with support from the International Federation, has responded by undertaking assessments to identify numbers of people affected and needs, as well as to begin the delivery of relief assistance and arrange temporary shelters.

The PNRCS has determined that external assistance is not required at this time, and is therefore not presently seeking funding or other assistance from donors.

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### The Situation

The Philippines, particularly prone to natural disasters, has been experiencing weather disturbances in recent days. The tail-end of a cold front affecting the Bicol region and eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao from 7-12 January 2009 triggered the occurrence of continuous rains which caused flash floods, flooding, landslides and sea surges in some areas of the country. Severely affected by the brunt of the continuous rains were the cities of Cagayan de Oro and Gingoog, and the provinces of Misamis Oriental and Northern Samar. At the same time, high tides with big waves struck in Aringay, La Union, Surigao City; Siargao Island, Bucas Grande Island and Dinagat Island in Surigao del Norte Province, Surigao del Sur, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Compostela Valley and Davao del Norte. It is important to note that Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental and Gingoog City have not experienced any floods since 1950s till now; therefore, creating additional challenges for local coping and response capacities.

The Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) continued monitoring the impact of the floods and undertook emergency relief operations through its network of chapters. Furthermore, the PNRC's disaster management service deployed assessment teams to better identify the extent of the impact and needs of those affected.

Reports received from the affected Red Cross chapters and data obtained from the areas personally visited by personnel show that around 71,431 families (329,045 persons) were affected by the flooding and sea surge:

	Affected	
	Number of families	Number of persons
Flooding	66,173	303,624
Sea surge	5,258	25,421
<b>Total</b>	<b>71,431</b>	<b>329,045</b>

Reports indicate 15 casualties, two missing persons and seven others injured. In total, 5,268 of the families affected have been accommodated at 103 evacuation centres established during the height of the flooding in affected areas. As a consequence of flooding and the sea surge, some 1,604 houses were totally destroyed and 1,890 houses partially damaged

### Red Cross and Red Crescent action

More than 500 Red Cross volunteers were mobilized from the PNRC chapters in the affected areas and chapters in the nearby areas, for emergency evacuations, rescue operations, provision of first aid, and carrying out

<sup>1</sup> Increased from the previous figure following field assessments and further information from Red Cross chapters in the affected areas

assessments. Volunteers were involved in the running of emergency canteens in evacuation centres, and in the packing and distribution of relief goods. PNRC established welfare desk services at evacuation centres, and provided psychosocial support to those affected.

As of 21 January 2009, PNRC has served a total of 14,086 families (70,381 persons) with emergency food rations consisting of rice, noodles and sardines in the affected areas of Misamis Oriental, Cagayan de Oro City, Gingoog City, Iligan City, Lanao del Norte, Agusan del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Surigao del Norte and Agusan del Sur.

Some 10,649 persons were provided with emergency canteen services in the evacuation centres in Gingoog City, Cagayan de Oro City, Iligan City, Lanao del Norte and Surigao del Norte

A total of 508 families in four evacuation centres selected in Lanao del Norte, Surigao del Norte and Iligan City received clothing and other non-food items such as blankets (1,016), mats (1,016), jerry cans (508) and tarpaulins. These non-food items, particularly the jerry cans and tarpaulins, were pre-positioned supplies provided by ICRC.

Eight regional disaster response team-trained Red Cross staff were mobilized and deployed by the PNRC disaster management services to Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental and Gingoog City to conduct assessments.

According to reports obtained from the assessment teams, the general situation has begun to normalize; families who were evacuated to school buildings and city halls have begun returning to their own communities. As the weather improves, flood water is gradually receding, and access to the provinces and cities has been restored

The resources of the local government units were mobilized through the declaration of a state of calamity, whereby access is granted to utilize the *five per cent calamity fund* allocated for addressing the immediate and the long-term needs of the affected communities.

Support for the disaster relief operations in the affected provinces was provided also through the Presidential social fund. Government offices have been given the mandate to release funds to fast-track rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure. The department of agriculture has been tasked to look into the rehabilitation of the agricultural areas affected by the flooding.

No price increase of basic commodities was noted; there are relevant products available on the market and the local department of trade and industry offices closely monitor market prices.

There was no food shortage reported either with evacuees and affected families having access to sufficient food provided by various non-governmental organizations, government, civic organizations and the Red Cross.

**Gingoog City:** Existing evacuation centres are gradually being closed down. The city authorities has started planning for the reconstruction of houses totally destroyed. Since families affected were mainly located on the river banks, local government units (LGUs) are currently examining the possibility of reallocating them to safer land. Barangay officials have likewise been ordered by the city mayor to address existing needs of their constituents by utilizing the five per cent calamity fund of the barangay. If this is found insufficient, the city government will augment it through its own five per cent calamity fund. Local water district offices have been distributing water purifying tablets to families affected. Household members, who have lost their homes, are being attended to by the city social welfare and development office.

**Misamis Oriental:** Reports received through the PNRC assessment team indicates minimal damage to infrastructure, houses and health facilities in Misamis Oriental. The local government is coping adequately with the degree of damage caused in the area. Basic food is accessible and prices of the basic commodities are stable. As mentioned earlier, the department of trade and industry is in charge of monitoring market prices.



Welfare desk services set up at an evacuation centre in Gingoog City and run by Red Cross Project 143 volunteers (Photo: PNRC)

Apart from the Red Cross itself, several multinational corporations based in Misamis Oriental have provided assistance to those affected through their corporate social responsibility programme, either directly to the affected families or through the local government unit. Roads are all passable and as the weather improves, families have begun to return to their own communities.

**Cagayan de Oro City:** Reports received show that there have been several health-related cases registered associated mainly with weather conditions such as cough, upper respiratory tract infection (URTI), etc. which were seen to at local health facilities. There was no food shortage experienced by the families in the evacuation centres. The resources of the local government unit have proven sufficient to cater to and address the needs of those affected. Minimal damage to agriculture was reported. Transportation is now back to normal and water supply is not damaged. The local government unit is in charge of allocating resources, and coordinates assistance provided through non-governmental organizations, civic and other institutions to avoid any duplication.

Upon recommendation from the assessment team, the PNRC is currently phasing down its relief operations. It is expected that the final round of food distribution for 1,200 persons will be finalized by chapters in the above mentioned areas. PNRC expects to close down its entire operation for this disaster at the end of this week

As for long-term intervention, assessments have indicated that the local chapter should put programmes in place to institutionalize primary health care and community initiatives as well as *Project 143*, which aims to develop a core group of 43 trained volunteers in each barangay to support PNRC disaster response and longer term activities. Chapters should also strengthen the capacities of the local community through training and the barangay disaster action team (BDAT).

Maintaining its supervisory role, the PNRC national headquarters has been facilitating the procurement of rice, other food items (canned goods, noodles) and financial support to chapter disaster operations. As mentioned earlier, the national headquarters also deployed an assessment team to the affected areas; the team has currently relinquished the operation and is on standby. Monitoring was maintained 24 hours a day by the PNRC operations centre. Coordination with the relevant national and local authorities and other local partner agencies in disaster management was also maintained both in the field and at headquarters.



Red Cross Project 143 volunteers conducted emergency evacuation and rescue, and first aid services for residents of affected barangays in Gingoog City (Photos: PNRC)

## How we work

**All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.**

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".

### Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

## Contact information

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