

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: VOLCANIC ERUPTION 02 August 2001

Information Bulletin N° 02/01

DREF Allocated: 75,000 CHF

This Information Bulletin is being issued based on the humanitarian needs described below. A DREF allocation of CHF 75,000 has been released. Based on further updates and details the Federation is preparing to call for international support through an Emergency Appeal which will be an estimated CHF 250,000.

The Situation

Mount Mayon Volcano in the central Philippines has erupted for the second time, sending tens of thousands of villagers fleeing in panic. The latest series of eruptions began on 26 July and continued on 27 July. One was more violent than the previous series a month earlier. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) said the eruptions produced life-threatening lava flows, which swept down mainly the Bonga Gully in the southeast and the Basud Gully to the east. All flows were contained within the 6km permanent danger zone.

Volcanologists raised the level of alert around Mayon to a maximum of five, after downgrading it to level three when the first eruptions stopped on 4 July. The latest PHIVOLCS bulletin records major eruptions of incandescent rock, producing a continuous roar.

The latest eruptions struck when all but 957 families (who have been permanently displaced by the June eruptions) had returned to their homes. Although no deaths or injuries have been noted, reports indicate that more than 40,000 villagers have been forced to flee their homes. Evacuees are being housed in public facilities such as school buildings, gymnasiums and tent cities. There are currently 27 evacuation camps housing 9,773 families, or 46,914 individuals. These families are mainly from the municipalities within 7km of the volcano. There has been congestion in some evacuation centres as the number of evacuees rises. Although road access to the areas is good, all air travel has been suspended because of the massive ash falls. PHIVOLCS experts expect more explosions. Should heavy rain occur, residents in areas adjacent to river channels originating from the volcano will be particularly at risk.

The Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) has requested the immediate assistance of the International Federation to assist 957 permanently displaced families (almost 5,000 individuals) housed in evacuation camps while they await government resettlement. These people lived within 6km of Mount Mayon and have no prospect of returning to their former homes.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Action to date

The PNRC was among the first to mobilize when Mount Mayon erupted on June 24, and assisted 9,350 families, or 46,724 individuals. Rice, cans of sardines, biscuits and noodles were among the food distributed. Plastic water containers, blankets, tarpaulins, medicines and used clothes were also dispensed.

The PNRC chapter in Albay-Legazpi city has been working with the provincial disaster coordinating council and other agencies in the area. The Albay-Legazpi city chapter, augmented by staff and volunteers from Camarine Norte and Sur, and Catanduanes chapters, assisted in the evacuation of 9,000 families. The PNRC has provided food - 92 sacks of rice, 4,500 canned fish, and 15,528 cups of noodles - and non-food items - 1,682 pairs of slippers - to 6,532 families since 26 July. Relief distribution will continue for the rest of the week. The PNRC headquarters is planning to send additional food supplies as soon as clearance for air travel is given. This current relief effort is exhausting central supplies.

Two of the 27 evacuation centres are being run by the PNRC. These are situated in Malilipot (2,245 people) and Legazpi City (16,202 people).

Health intervention has also been provided by the community health & nursing service (CHNS). This includes the deployment of water purifiers and filtering machines, and conducting health education and sanitation campaigns in evacuation centres. Over-the-counter medicines and antibiotics have been pre-positioned in the chapter for use.

An assessment team from the PNRC headquarters conducted a needs assessment. The team comprised a regional disaster response officer from the regional delegation in Bangkok, PNRC director of services, PNRC communications manager, PNRC disaster response team members from disaster management services (DMS) and community health and nursing service (CHNS).

Proposed Action

The assessment team recommended that additional assistance be provided to 957 families who will be permanently resettled by the government. These families live within 6km of Mount Mayon. Until a suitable place is identified, they will live in the evacuation centres. Both food and non-food items are to be provided.

In support of the forthcoming full Emergency Appeal - estimated to be approximately 250,000 CHF - to assist 957 families for two months, CHF 75,000 has been allocated from the Federation's disaster relief emergency fund (DREF) for immediate release to the assistance operation. The value of assistance corresponds to CHF 130 per family per month.

Government action

The local disaster coordinating councils (DCCs) have provided personnel and vehicles to assist with the evacuation. The Philippines army was also called upon to help local residents escape the path of destruction. The DCCs were responsible for the provision of immediate needs - food, shelter, medicines and water - to those affected within their constituencies, using their respective calamity funds.

In addition, local health units were placed in charge of water and sanitation needs of the evacuees. Medical teams are also deployed daily to the evacuation centres to ensure health conditions remain stable.

Local government officials are appealing for outside assistance, because "calamity funds are already depleted".

NGOs

Approximately 10 NGOs are operating in the area. The NGOs indicated below are coordinating with the PNRC with respect to their relief distribution efforts.

- Church of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints

2,557 families or 11,824 persons were assisted on 4 July, during the first eruption, from the municipalities of Daraga and Legazpi City. Relief goods distributed include rice and canned goods.

- LIONS International

Rice, noodles, canned goods and dried fish were distributed to 2,125 families on 29 July.

Coordination

The International Federation, the PNRC, the provincial disaster coordinating council and above NGOs are coordinating their assistance efforts.

Identified Needs

Although food and water remains the top priority, the PNRC has also identified the following needs for the evacuees:

- Blankets
- Mats
- Toilet and bath facilities
- Water containers
- Dust masks

While the PNRC and its chapters possess the human capacity to continue with the emergency relief distributions, funds are running low. Assistance in funding is requested at this stage to support the forthcoming emergency appeal 250,000 CHF including the repayment of the DREF funds, 75,000 CHF released to help PNRC assistance to the vulnerable.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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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.

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