

Information bulletin

Philippines: Drought and dry spells

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Philippine Red Cross, with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has determined that external assistance is not required, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

[<click here for detailed contact information>](#)

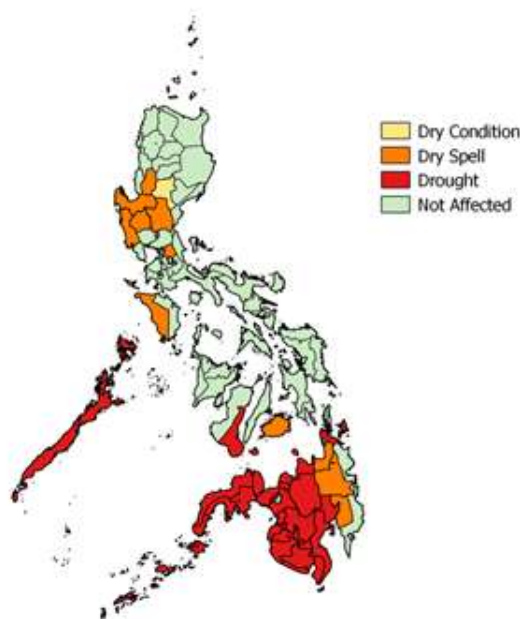
Summary

Some 42 per cent of the Philippines is currently experiencing drought or dry spells brought on by El Niño effect. As of 15 April, 39 provinces, cities, municipalities and villages have declared a state of calamity. The worst affected areas are Mindanao and the Visayas regions. According to [UN OCHA](#), around 181,687 farmers and 224,834 hectares of agricultural land have been affected since January 2016. Already, an estimated CHF 81 million in agricultural production has been lost. Rainfall for March was again well below normal.

So far, the Government has released funds to implement mitigation-and-response strategies addressing food security, energy security, as well as health and safety in affected communities. Humanitarian agencies are supporting with emergency food security assessments.

The Philippine Red Cross (PRC) has been responding to affected areas by supplying safe drinking water and food relief assistance to some of the most affected areas.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) has also warned the public on the possibility of a La Niña event occurring later this year, after El Niño ends. La Niña is the opposite of El Niño and is characterized by above normal rainfall, strong monsoon activity, and formation of more tropical cyclones.



Many areas in the Philippines have been affected by El Niño with significant detrimental effects in agriculture and consumer water supply. Source: PAG-ASA

The situation

According to the [World Meteorological Organization](#), this is one of the most powerful El Niño events in modern times and its impact will remain for several months to come. Since the first quarter of 2015, most areas of the country have experienced below normal rainfall attributed to the El Niño effect. PAGASA states that 29 per cent of the country experienced drought in March 2016, while the prediction is that 40 per cent of

the country will experience drought in April, and 31 per cent in May. Most of the affected areas are in Mindanao. According to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), as of April 16, a total of 457,497 families or 2,124,790 persons from Regions NCR, I, II, III, IV-A, IV-B, VI, VII, X, XI, XII, and ARMM have been affected by El Nino.

| PAGASA's drought/dry spell assessment by 31 March 2016 | |
|---|---|
| Islands | Provinces experiencing dry spell (total 11) |
| Luzon (7) | Benguet, Pangasinan, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Zambales, Rizal, Occidental Mindoro |
| Visayas (1) | Bohol |
| Mindanao (3) | Compostela Valley, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur |
| Provinces experiencing drought (total 23) | |
| Luzon (1) | Palawan |
| Visayas (2) | Negros Oriental, Siquijor |
| Mindanao (20) | Zamboanga Del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, Bukidnon, Camiguin, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Misamis Occidental, Misamis Oriental, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, South Cotabato, North Cotabato, Sarangani, Sultan Kudarat, Surigao del Norte, Basilan, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-tawi |
| Drought | |
| Dry spell | |
| Defined as three consecutive months of: | |
| More than 60% reduction from average rainfall | 21-60% reduction from average rainfall |

Less rainfall has reduced access to clean drinking water and water available for agricultural use. Parts of the country, such as Mindanao, are also experiencing a shortage of power supplied by hydroelectric dams due to the low water level. Also in Mindanao, a state of calamity was declared in Zamboanga City on 13 January 2016 due to low dam water levels. The Philippine News Agency reported that 9 out of 25 dams in the city have dried up, 6 are at critical levels, and another 10 below normal water levels.

The Department of Agriculture estimates that 181,687 farmers have been affected by the drought. Of this, 54 per cent are rice farmers, 38 per cent are corn farmers, and 8 per cent are high value crop (HVC) farmers. In terms of land area, 224 834 hectares were affected. Pest infestation is affecting 1,704 farmers in Region III, with armyworm damaging 1,060 hectares of HVCs while and rat infestation is affecting Region XII (South Cotabato, Sarangani, North Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat) and Region XV (Maguindanao).

Due to insufficient rainfall, few farming activities have been undertaken in other areas of the country particularly in Ilocos, Western Visayas, Zamboanga Peninsula, Misamis Occidental, Davao Region, SOCCSKSARGEN¹, and Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. The *Performance of Philippines Agriculture* report by [Philippine Statistics Authority](#) states an 11 per cent drop in production from the same period in 2014. Consequences are far-reaching as not only Mindanao, but the rest of the country also depends on rice supplied from these areas. Serious concerns in food security may arise, considering Mindanao's central provinces of South Cotabato, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani are the rice granary of southern Philippines.

Aside from crops, fisheries have been negatively affected as well by the extreme heat and prolonged drought. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), [reports](#) a 20 per cent decline in fish catch due to warmer waters, citing that at least 100,000 fisherfolk would need to look for alternative sources of income.

Another effect of the drought season is the threat of forest fires. Forests on Mt. Apo, Mt. Kanlaon and Bud Bongao have been decimated due to burning caused by both direct and indirect effects of El Niño. Fires on Mt. Kanlaon were reportedly ignited due to heat discharged from superheated rocks. Grass fires were also reported in General Santos and Cotabato City.

It is also forecast that the La Niña phenomenon will follow once the El Niño season has ended. La Niña is predicted to bring stronger monsoon and excessive rainfall resulting in flooding. This will obviously help with the drought situation but flooding will cause damage to crops and hinder replanting, hence exacerbating the current situation.

On 1st April 2016, near Kidapawan City, North Cotabato, Mindanao, farmers gathered in protest demanding government assistance to drought victims. They wanted the release of bags of rice for distribution to farmers

¹ South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and General Santos

hit by El Niño in the province. Unfortunately, this escalated to a standoff between protesters and police forces, resulting in a disturbance, many injuries and the death of two protesters.

Action by the authorities and other agencies

The Department of Agriculture, through its El Niño action plan, has been concentrating on production support, water management, and information dissemination. On 2 March 2016, the Department of Budget and Management released some PHP 12.3 billion (CHF 248 million), to the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) including funds to address the impact of El Niño this year, of which the PHP 500 million allocation in [Quick Response Funds](#)² will cover NIA's requirements to address the impacts of the El Niño phenomenon.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has been allocated some PHP 1.32 billion (CHF 27.6 million) to respond to the effects of El Niño through the implementation of cash-for-work and livelihood assistance to affected households. By [20 April](#), the DSWD had provided up to PHP 681 million (CHF 14.2 million) to affected households in the National Capital Region (NCR) and 12 other regions throughout the Philippines through the respective Local Government Units (LGUs). This included food assistance and cash-for-work activities.

The FAO is using drones to survey the extent of damage caused by the El Niño to farms in the Central Philippines' Visayas province. According to FAO, drones are being flown to conduct aerial assessment and gather data that would be useful for disaster preparedness and response efforts. Other agencies are also considering assessments and advocating for support.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The PRC National Headquarters released Administrative Memo (No. 62) regarding PRC Preparedness for El Niño and instructed all Chapters to activate communications centres, staff and volunteers; coordinate with the Local Government Units, and conduct inventory and replenishment of supplies.

The followings are some of the current response activities to El Niño:

| Item/Programme | Total Number Served |
|--------------------------|---|
| <p>Food packs</p> | <p>As the impact of El Niño hampers agricultural production, food has become scarce. PRC has distributed food packs to 97,863 families (Bukidnon 3,370, Cotabato 6,000, Davao Oriental 2,706, General Santos 871 Maguindanao 8,181, Northern Cotabato 30,975, Sarangani 27,032 and South Cotabato 18,728). Food packs contain 3 to 5 kilogrammes of rice, canned goods and noodles.</p> <p>The bulk of these food packs have been provided by the Provincial Government released under a State of Calamity fund. In accordance with the Omnibus Election Code Article XXII section 261(v)(2) during election campaigns the Provincial Governments cannot provide relief support to communities. In accordance with the Omnibus during this time, PRC will provide the relief on behalf of the Provincial and Local Governments.</p> <p>Also, part of this response has been supported by ICRC, the latest being a food relief distribution on 26-30 April, to farming families from 15 far-flung villages in President Roxas and Magpet municipalities of North Cotabato, Mindanao.</p> |
| <p>Water</p> | <p>A total of 716,950 litres was produced and out of these, 715,000 were distributed in Zamboanga City. Up to 31,269 individuals were served in Zamboanga City.</p> <p>On 1 February 2016, the Zamboanga City Water District requested the National Society's assistance in alleviating the water shortage in the area. PRC deployed a water tanker and mobile water treatment unit which helped enhance the capacity of two existing 5 and 10-litre water tankers at the Zamboanga City chapter. Also to augment water delivery capacity within the city, a tanker from Tandag, Surigao del Sur was sent to Zamboanga.</p> |

² Government budget allocations that represent pre-disaster or standby funds for agencies in order to immediately assist areas stricken by disaster.

The PRC, through its emergency operations centre and 100 nationwide Chapters, will continue to monitor the situation and engage with government authorities for appropriate measures and action, where needed.

The IFRC Philippines country office continues to monitor the situation and the various climate effects around the country and coordinates with HCT members in humanitarian platforms. IFRC also coordinates directly with the PRC Disaster Management Services Unit and provides technical, communication and information management support. IFRC Philippines country office is also in direct contact with the DCPRR Unit of the Asia Pacific Regional Office in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The PRC together with IFRC are assessing and monitoring the situation, and considering next steps.



In support to families effected by El Niño, the Misamis Oriental-Cagayan de Oro chapter distributed a 2-3 days food ration to 301 families in barangay Cauyanon, Opol, Misamis Oriental. This is to support families who rely most on farming for living. Photo: PRC

Contact information

For further information, please contact:

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives.
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**
and a culture of
non-violence and peace.