

OPERATIONS UPDATE



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: LANDSLIDE & FLOODS

20 February 2006

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 183 countries.

In Brief

Appeal No. MDRPH001;
Operations Update no. 01;
Period covered: first 72 hours;

Appeal history:

- Launched on 17 February 2006 for CHF 2,126,000 (USD 1.6 million or EUR 1.3 million) in cash, kind or services to provide assistance for 6 months.
- CHF200,000 has been allocated from the Secretariat's Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF)

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

A massive landslide buried hundreds of houses and a school packed with elementary students in the eastern Philippines on Friday. Hundreds of families have been affected and 281 houses being destroyed. The confirmed death toll is 72 although there are fears that this could rise dramatically with 1,000 people believed to be missing, feared dead, including 250 staff and students at a local school. This projected death toll is lower than the weekend estimate of 1,800. Fifty-seven people have been rescued.

Five hundred houses are reported buried in Guinsahugon village, St. Bernard town (total population 2,500), in Southern Leyte island, after non-stop rain for two weeks and reports of an earth tremor. The elementary school was in session when the landslide struck around 0900 local time (0100 GMT). Only three houses were left standing in the village, 670km southeast of Manila, initial reports said. Survivors were being treated at hospital.

The village was hit by two separate landslides, resulting in the village being covered by four metres of mud over an area of approximately 3kmsq.

The landslides also blocked tributaries of a major river, which could cause flooding of nearby areas. More rain is expected, which could complicate rescue efforts and increase the likelihood of additional landslides.

Reports said that the ground was soaked because of days of rain. Witnesses spoke of trees sliding down upright with the mud. Some analysts pointed out illegal logging in the area may have been one contributory factor to the tragedy.

In November 1991, about 6,000 people were killed on Leyte in floods and landslides triggered by a tropical storm. Last weekend, seven road construction workers died in a landslide after falling into a 46-meter (150-foot) deep ravine in the mountain town of Sogod on Leyte.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) Disaster Management Service Operations Room reported that 200 PNRC personnel were on site, including an assessment team, health teams, communications support, two dog teams as well as people to provide psycho-social assistance. Additional supplies were also being flown in, such as food, water, medicines from a Basic Unit New Emergency Health Kit (NEHK), other health kits, blankets, mosquito nets, rain coats, tents, radio communication facilities, power generators, trauma kits, biscuits, and body bags.

The local PNRC chapter supported by neighbouring chapters and staff from National HQ (DM Service Manager, medical staff, logistics staff) continued to carry out the operation in coordination with local authorities and other organisations.

According to a PNRC internal Disaster Bulletin today (February 20), the national society has distributed relief goods to 540 families (2,700 individuals) plus material and equipment to rescue teams.

The chairman of the PNRC chaired a coordination meeting Sunday as the emergency response operation gathered pace. The PNRC was set to bring in 500 shovels to help in the digging and rescue effort. Lack of water is also a concern and PNRC was concentrating efforts in this area too. Five big tents were also being transported in to establish an operational centre close to the disaster site.

The PNRC Sunday began tracing work and dealt with 95 requests on the first day from people desperate to be reunited with loved ones. One individual has been successfully reunited with their family.

PNRC chapter administrators and a response team were on site within two hours of the disaster and engaged in search and rescue as well as providing initial relief to those affected.

Soon after, the PNRC national headquarters transported 100 family tents, 300 blankets, 400 cartons of biscuits, five cartons of water purification powder and 700 body bags by cargo plane.

PNRC headquarters has mobilized disaster response teams from other provincial chapters to the stricken area. PNRC directors and managers continue to meet to map out the evolving response.

The Federation launched its emergency appeal Friday and response from partners has been strong. Conditions locally in this remote area remain extreme. The treacherous circumstances surrounding rescue work still means that assessment beyond immediate needs is still in its infancy.

With the prospect of more regular information and a stabilisation in terms of the operation response, if not the conditions, in the next few days, the Federation will communicate more directly against its provisional plan of action as well as any changes appropriate in the light of the situation on the ground.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the Philippines, there were reports that ongoing heavy rain prompted another landslide in Mindanao. Several communities were being evacuated because of fears of other mudslides.