

PHILIPPINES: TYPHOON AND FLOODS

20 November 1998

appeal no. 32/98

situation report no. 2

period covered: 3 - 10 November 1998

The Philippines has been struck by a series of nine typhoons in 1998, the most recent (Babs) compounded the widespread damage, and stretched already limited Philippine National Red Cross Society (PNRC) assistance capabilities and resources. Despite the resulting devastation and the urgent need for assistance, a timely response in the form of pledges and donations has not materialized. Unless more support is made available, the relief effort will remain limited, or may be halted altogether. It is therefore urgent that the cash and in-kind resources be made available to continue providing adequate levels of emergency assistance.

The context

Three recent typhoons have affected at least 5 million people on the island of Luzon. As a result of the latest typhoons, large areas of the island remain inaccessible, while monsoon rains continue to pound Bicol, causing severe floods. The most recent typhoon, Babs, was the ninth of the year -- but it unfortunately may not be the last one according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

On-going field assessments indicate that the typhoons altogether claimed 481 lives, with 1,107 injured and 82 remaining missing. Typhoon Babs alone directly affected 846,422 families (or 2,554,590 persons). An unprecedented number of 1,389,186 families (or 5,279,951 persons) were impacted by the three typhoons in just five weeks. Of the affected population, some 137,000 persons rendered homeless need urgent assistance to facilitate a speedy recovery.

The National Disaster Co-ordinating Council (NDCC), the highest policy-making and co-ordinating body in the country, also reported serious damages to agriculture and infrastructure, estimated at P 6.3 billion. Food security is also a concern since it takes at least four months for the farmers in the rice-producing Bicol region to replant their devastated rice fields.

Latest events

The majority of the affected areas are no longer flooded, but inclement weather continues to threaten the Bicol region. Catanduanes Province remains an area of concern since eight of the 11 towns are still inaccessible, while the rehabilitation of transport and communication systems progresses at a very slow pace.

PNRC field workers strongly recommended for the speedy dispatch of assistance to homeless families because rains put higher risks on their well-being. Further food assistance are needed, and will be undertaken through a food-for-work scheme. Local initiatives are also undertaken to mobilise resources immediately shift PNRC assistance from purely relief to health and rehabilitation activities.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Government action •

After local governments exhausted the existing Calamity Funds in providing emergency assistance to disaster victims, the National Disaster Co-ordinating Council (NDCC) is now devising medium and long-term rehabilitation plans focusing on the hardest hit areas. While the integrated plan will be based on the contributions of its member-agencies, it is not yet determined how funds will be secured since national government Calamity Funds are exhausted as well.

The Department of Health (DOH) recently assumed the responsibility for managing health operations in Catanduanes to ensure the delivery of basic medical services. A 20-person team composed of hospital and public health personnel will compliment the local health workers, who were themselves typhoon victims.

Red Cross action •

After operating for nearly two months, the PNRC, through its 40 Chapters, has assisted some 88,212 families (or 457,765 persons) by providing compact food, rice, canned goods, used clothing and plastic sheeting. Some P 12 million (CHF413,790.00) worth of relief items were already distributed because of the outstanding requirements of 137,000 homeless families (822,000 persons) who sought refuge at congested evacuation centres, makeshift huts, or with their relatives.

The PNRC also assigned a nurse from the Community Health and Nursing Service (CHNS) to monitor the health situation in the area. Some 40 cartons of assorted medicines were also sent to the province to compliment local resources.

Responding to the urgent requirements of victims, PNRC relief funds were almost totally depleted, necessitating a scaling down of its operation. Some 26 Chapters had already closed operations while assistance is focused in Bicol and the provinces of Cagayan, Isabela and Pangasinan. The US Embassy contribution of USD 25,000 is being used to buy rice and sardines for at least one more week. Rations may have to be limited to reach more people.

The Disaster Management Services (DMS) dispatched two teams to Bicol and Northern Luzon last weekend to map out with the Chapter staff approaches to help a greater number of people. A meeting among Bicol Chapter Administrators and Board Chairmen was held on Wednesday (11 November, 1998) to prioritise Red Cross interventions to be undertaken in the hardest hit areas.

PNRC also launched a local appeal, but the response has been disappointing. A similar response was received from funding drives to national newspapers and TV-radio stations, with very limited responses largely due to the regional economic crunch.

Outstanding needs

The situation has not improved. Food and shelter materials are urgently needed in Bicol and Northern Luzon since most relief agencies, including the PNRC, had exhausted its resources. Meanwhile, unscrupulous traders are hoarding stocks or selling basic commodities at escalated rates. Homeless families have constructed makeshift houses to protect themselves from intermittent monsoon rains.

Health risks are also high. The destruction of shelter, water and sanitation facilities, displacement of children, women and elderly, and inadequate health services in flooded and isolated areas further increased the misfortune of the most vulnerable.

Support to the appeal is urgently needed. The PNRC may be compelled to halt its relief work if support continues to be limited, despite the rapidly depleting relief stocks and urgent need.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The PNRC continues to work closely with governments (national and local), UN agencies, and NGOs to ensure equitable distribution and maximum utilisation of resources. The local media also provided a continued coverage of Red Cross relief activities to mobilise local resources and support.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

The PNRC is currently stretching its already very limited resources. There has been no significant response to the Appeal despite the urgency of the situation faced by the affected population.

To enable the PNRC to assist in mitigating the suffering of helpless victims, there remains the need for an immediate response from the international community .

Peter Rees-Gildea
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TYPHOONS & FLOODS**APPEAL No. 32/98****PLEDGES
RECEIVED**

20/11/98

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
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CASH

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
REQUESTED IN APPEAL				3,458,000		
BRITISH - RC		20,000	GBP	45,412	12/11/98	HOUSING MATERIALS
FINNISH - RC		300,000	FIM	80,130	11/11/98	
ICELANDIC - RC		200,000	ISK	3,999	03/11/98	
SWEDISH - RC		600,000	SEK	100,320	05/11/98	
USA - GOVT		25,000	USD	34,600	30/10/98	
JAPAN - RC		10,000,000	JPY	105,000	13/11/98	
THAI - RC		5,000	USD	6,900	16/11/98	
MONACO - RC		20,000	FRF	4,930	06/11/98	
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN CASH				381,291	CHF	

**KIND AND SERVICES
(INCL. PERSONNEL)**

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED IN KIND/SERVICES				0.00	CHF	

**NOT REQUESTED IN
APPEAL**

DONOR	CATEGORY	QUANTITY	UNIT	VALUE CHF	DATE	COMMENT
SUB/TOTAL RECEIVED				0.00	CHF	

