

# ***PHILIPPINES: TYPHOON AND FLOODS***

5 February 1999

*appeal no. 32/98*

*situation report no. 3*

*period covered: 10 November 1998 - 14 January 1999*

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*The Philippine Red Cross completed the first phase of its two phase operation to assist typhoon victims on schedule and, in view of the low response to the appeal, revised downwards the number of beneficiaries for the second phase. Distributions to this second group, now numbering 50,000 people, will be completed by mid February.*

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## ***The context***

The country's bid to recover from the disastrous effects of the El Nino phenomenon, the regional economic plunge, and a dengue outbreak in Mindanao was shattered when three typhoons (Vicki, Zeb and Babs) devastated parts of the country in September and October 1998, affecting up to 5 million people. The disaster killed 481 persons and injured 1,107, destroyed infrastructure, and decimated agriculture .

A timely response to the needs of the victims was hampered by the lack of funds available from the government. Considerable assistance was, therefore, provided by PNRD and other agencies.

## ***Latest events***

Monsoon rains continued across the country, hampering rehabilitation and restoration efforts in Bicol and other regions badly hit by the typhoons and floods. Recently planted rice/cornfields were again flooded and farmers lost their crops for the second time in two seasons.

In Catanduanes, landslides and floods continued to delay the delivery of food and other basic commodities. Power has been restored to only three communities since October 1998 because roads and bridges have not yet been repaired and, according to local engineers, these repairs can only be completed in the summer months. It will also be months before agriculture in Catanduanes can regain momentum since coconuts, abaca and other vegetable plantations were practically wiped out.

Intermittent rains are also occurring in the Cagayan valley, though not as heavily as in Bicol and the eastern Philippines. Most of the affected population in Cagayan and Pangasinan rehabilitated themselves soon after the floodwaters receded, but affected families in the low-lying and coastal areas of Isabela need further help in terms of food and shelter.

### **Government action**

The government has already shifted its priorities from relief to rehabilitation. Through the National Disaster Co-ordinating Council (NDCC), an integrated rehabilitation plan was formulated after consultation with grassroots counterparts. Rehabilitation of the agricultural sector may be incorporated

into the government's La Nina Plan, but the necessary resources have yet to be identified. The response to government initiated fund raising campaigns was limited, due to the overall weak economic situation.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

### **Red Cross action w**

The International Federation launched an Appeal in October 1998 and subsequently sent regional delegates to assist the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) in setting up and managing a two phase operation.

#### ***First Phase (October 1998 to December 1998)***

The PNRC shifted from emergency relief activities to the rehabilitation of 30,000 families through the provision of food, housing materials, kitchen and cooking utensils, seeds, farm and fishing tools.

In view of the limited donor response to the emergency, in December 1998 the PNRC re-assessed the list of beneficiaries for the second phase. Together with the Federation's regional disaster preparedness delegate (working out of Kuala Lumpur) and Spanish Red Cross delegates, the PNRC finalised the list of beneficiary communities and families for the second phase. ECHO funds, administered through the Spanish Red Cross, will be utilised for this phase.

#### ***Second Phase (January 1999 to February 1999)***

During this period 19,000 families will receive rice, canned goods and other food items as part of a food-for-work programme. Some 2,000 homeless families will receive additional assistance with shelter materials consisting of roofing sheets, nails, and lumber. Additionally 5,000 severely affected families will receive extra assistance in the form of household kits and blankets. Health activities are currently being carried out in Catanduanes and other affected areas by PNRC nurse volunteers.

## ***Outstanding needs***

Because of the limited international response, rehabilitation has been slower and not as extensive as originally intended; some people are still facing difficulties with shelter and income. In order to complete PNRC activities, the operation will be extended by two weeks -- until mid February 1999.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

The PNRC continues to work closely with both national and local government authorities, UN agencies and NGOs to ensure equitable distributions and maximum utilisation of resources. The local media has also continued to provide coverage of Red Cross relief activities in an effort to mobilise local resources and support.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

## ***Conclusion***

Despite a limited response to the Appeal, the PNRRC, through a timely re-assessment of priorities and beneficiaries, was able to provide assistance to the worst-affected members of the population. Its well established branches and its formal role in national disaster response, were both factors enabling it to provide short and long term relief , even if the scale of assistance will finally not be as extensive as originally planned.

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