

PHILIPPINES: TYPHOONS AND FLOODS

17 June, 1999

appeal no. 32/98

situation report no. 4 (Final Report)

period covered: 28 October 1998 - 28 February, 1999

Despite a modest response to the appeal, necessitating a reduction in beneficiary numbers, the operation was able to provide urgently needed relief supplies to more than 150,000 people affected by the three typhoons. Aid comprised foodstuffs, household items and reconstruction materials.

The context

Between September and October 1998, three typhoons devastated northern and eastern parts of the Philippines. The typhoons -- Vicki, Zeb and Babs -- inflicted suffering on more than 5.2 million Filipinos. More than CHF 350 million worth of road networks, bridges and other infrastructure, as well as agricultural crops and 227,000 houses, were destroyed. A total of 481 persons died, 81 were missing, and 1,107 were severely injured.

Bicol region bore most of the typhoons' wrath, with 75 percent of the affected population and 92 percent of the casualties. In the province of Catanduanes, 24,522 families out of a total 38,829 were rendered homeless. The storms also washed away 46,200 hectares of rice, coconut, abaca, corn and vegetable plantations -- the area's only hope for economic recovery from the devastating typhoon Angela in 1995.

The Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) carried out evacuation and rescue activities, and distributed emergency food to evacuees. From September to November 1998, it provided compact food, rice, canned goods, noodles, plastic sheets and family packs to 88,212 families. Altogether it spent CHF 415,000 on relief items, exhausting its Relief Funds.

On 28 October 1998, the PNRC sought international assistance through the International Federation, to sustain its efforts to address the outstanding requirements of 137,000 homeless families (822,000 persons) who had sought refuge in congested evacuation centres, makeshift huts, or with their relatives. The Federation Appeal sought CHF 3.458 million to assist 40,000 families (240,000 persons) in seven worst-hit provinces with food, kitchen and cooking utensils, housing materials and gardening or fishing tools. Eventually some of the food supplies were distributed to neighbouring provinces that were also badly affected.

To help get the operation started, CHF 200,000 was released from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). In November, because of the low response to the Appeal, the PNRC modified the Plan of Action. Priorities were placed on provision of food for 11,000 families. The distribution was carried out from December 1998 to early January 1999. The second phase, which was undertaken from late January to mid-March 1999, focused on food for work, provision of household and cooking utensils, housing materials, seeds and tools.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The operation was originally designed to provide 40,000 families (240,000 persons) with emergency food, 5,000 families with housing materials and another 5,000 families with household and cooking utensils and blankets.

The operation covered the provinces of Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur and Catanduanes in Bicol region, and Cagayan, Isabela and Pangasinan in Northern Luzon, although supplies were also shared with nearby provinces which also suffered from the typhoons and floods.

Needs Assessment and Selection of Beneficiaries w

A regional meeting attended by Chapter chairmen and administrators, and NHQ officials was held in Albay on 11 November 1998 to discuss operational guidelines and procedures -- with focus on the selection of beneficiaries and distribution mechanisms. Similar meetings were conducted in Northern Luzon provinces.

Disaster co-ordinating councils, local officials and social workers were involved in the identification of communities and beneficiaries. Lists provided by these officials were validated by Red Cross chapter staff and volunteers. The selection of beneficiaries was done extremely carefully because of the large numbers requiring help. Besides established guidelines in the PNRC Operations Manual, the following criteria were used:

- Number of worst affected families, destroyed houses, and casualties;
- Economic standing of the community or family;
- Extent of losses on agriculture, infrastructure, vital lifelines and private properties;
- Absence of substantial relief assistance from other sources;
- Degree of vulnerability of the community or family.

The Relief Operation w

A major change in the original plan was made in early November 1998 when no substantial and concrete contributions had been received, chiefly because of Hurricane Mitch in Central America. This major disaster on the other side of the world not only delayed the infusion of funds, but reduced the response to only 40.27 percent of the target figure.

In mid-November, PNRC's priority was the provision of food and cooking items. The purchase of housing materials was moved to the operation's second phase. The purchase of medicine and chlorine was removed from the plan since the Department of Health was in control of the situation. Other health activities were funded through local donations.

Finally, the PNRC came up with a revised target/plan of action:

- 30,000 families (instead of 40,000) to receive food items -- 10,000 to be supported by ECHO, and 20,000 through other sources, in two phases;
- 5,000 families to receive household starters;
- 2,000 homeless families (instead of 5,000) to be provided housing materials for the rehabilitation of their houses;
- 25 youth organisations to receive seeds and garden tools, and 100 fishermen to receive fishing gear.

Not only were the revised plans and objectives of the Operation achieved, in some cases components were even higher than originally planned, because costs of materials were lower than projected. All relief items were distributed on a family beneficiary basis, except for the seeds and gardening tools which were distributed to youth and women's organisations operating in severely affected communities.

Food Items w

The operation supplied 30,026 families (156,426 persons) with food items. The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), through the intermediary of the Spanish Red Cross (SRCS), provided a two-month food subsidy to each of the 10,000 families (52,565 persons) in Bicol, representing a total of 200 tons of rice, 93 tons sardines, 90 tons meatloaf, 30 tons salt, 30 tons sugar and 30,000 litres of cooking oil.

Federation appeal funds also assisted 20,026 families (103,861 persons) who received food items on two occasions. Each of the 11,018 families (57,941 persons) in Bicol and Northern Luzon received 7.5 kilos rice, 14 tins meatloaf and 14 tins sardines between December 1998 and mid-January 1999. Another 9,008 families (45,920 persons) were assisted in February 1999 on a food for work basis. Altogether, some 262.5 tons of rice, 35 tons of sardines and 33.9 tons of meatloaf were purchased for these distributions.

All these beneficiaries were in addition to the substantial number of families served by the PNRC utilising its own Relief Funds and local donations between October to early December 1998.

Household Starters w

The quantities of casseroles, pails and basins (5,000 pieces each) were doubled, thanks to lower than anticipated prices. These were distributed to 7,500 families in Catanduanes, 1,000 families in Camarines Norte, 1,000 families in Camarines Sur, and 500 families in Albay. The 25,000 pairs of cutlery items were also procured and distributed (5 pairs each) to 3,000 families in Catanduanes, 750 in Camarines Norte, 750 in Camarines Sur, and 500 in Albay.

Ten thousand blankets were procured as planned, and distributed (two each) to 3,500 families in Catanduanes and 1,500 families in Isabela. Similarly, 25,000 plates were distributed, five per family, to 3,500 and 1,500 families in Catanduanes and Isabela, respectively.

Housing Materials w

Four months after the typhoon, thousands of families, too poor to rebuild, were still in makeshift shelters. Though government and other service-oriented organisation had a plan to assist the homeless, they were not able to meet all needs immediately. Hence, the Red Cross included this component, assisting 2,127 families (10,973 persons) in Catanduanes. Each family received iron roofing sheets, nails and lumber. Altogether, 10,635 iron roofing sheets, 21,270 kilos of nails, 25,524 pieces of 2x2x12 lumber, and 21,270 pieces of 3x3x10 coconut lumber were purchased and distributed.

The operation managed to help more than its target beneficiaries, partly through minor changes in the support package, and partly as a result of lower costs offered by local suppliers.

Seeds and Garden Tools w

Fifty youth and women's organisations in Catanduanes received a total of 125 kilos of assorted fast-yielding vegetables seeds, plus 100 pieces of pick mattocks, 100 plastic sprinklers, 100 shovels and 50 sprayers.

Fishing Tools w

125 sets of coastal or municipal fishing gear, comprising gill net, nylon line, PE rope, rubber floater, lead sinker and netting twine were distributed to 125 subsistence fishermen whose equipment was destroyed by the typhoon.

Quality Measures w

The objectives of alleviating suffering and assisting in the rehabilitation of shelters were realised, although the operation fell short of its original targets. This was due to the delay in implementation and the partial coverage of the Appeal. Nevertheless, the assistance remained relevant because the target groups were the poorest and needy.

The phenomenal effects of the three typhoons prolonged the emergency period and justified the relevance of the food distributions, despite delays.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Training and experience gained by PNRC staff and volunteers in past major operations kept problems to a minimum. However, some challenges did occur, such as:

1. The objectives and plan of action had to be revised because the Appeal failed to generate the expected funds. Contributions arrived in mid-November and late December 1998, and represented only 40.27 percent of the Appeal. Reassessments had to be made because target beneficiaries had to be trimmed down.
2. The delivery of supplies to project areas and the distribution of food packages to beneficiaries were hampered by rains which continued to pound the eastern Philippines throughout the operation. Specifically, in the island province of Catanduanes, PNRC trucks ferrying assistance were stranded many times because of rough seas and strong winds. Vehicles were also unable to penetrate the devastated areas because of flooding.

MONITORING

The Federation sent the regional DP delegate based in Kuala Lumpur three times to the Philippines to assist in the overall planning and in the supervision of the distributions of

food and housing materials in the different project areas. The SRCS also sent delegates in January and February 1999 to finalise ECHO support.

The PNRC Board Chairperson, Secretary General and other NHQ officials visited the project areas to finalise the implementation plan and monitor progress of the operation.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The operation was planned and implemented in collaboration with government and the private sector in the different communities. Disaster co-ordinating councils, social workers, religious leaders and agriculturists were involved in the selection of communities and beneficiaries of the different assistance components. They were also relied on to assist in monitoring the appropriate utilisation of housing materials, seeds and garden tools, and fishing paraphernalia.

The National Disaster Co-ordinating Council (NDCC) and the Armed Forces (AFP) were tapped to provide military planes and a naval boat for large consignments of supplies from Manila to Catanduanes. Local government units provided additional land and sea transport facilities, as well as volunteers to assist in the hauling and actual distribution of the supplies.

PNRC worked closely with NGOs providing similar assistance to the different communities, such as CARE Philippines, Catanduanes Agriculture Assistance Program (CATAG) and Social Action Centres (SAC). Radio clubs also provided communication facilities. For maximum media coverage, PNRC also linked up with national and local print and broadcast media for continuous updates on the operation.

Contributions

See attached list of contributions (Annex I) .

Conclusion

The operation achieved the PNRC's objectives of alleviating the suffering and in facilitating the speedy recovery of the most vulnerable who were badly affected by typhoons Vicki, Zeb and Babs. More than 30,000 families (150,000 persons) among the poorest of the poor received assistance.

Despite challenges inherent in the limited coverage of the Appeal, the Philippine National Red Cross, through its dedicated staff and volunteers, undertook the operation with efficiency and professionalism, and in the process, promoted the Society's image as an effective humanitarian response organisation in the Philippines.

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