

INFORMATION BULLETIN



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: TYPHOON & TROPICAL STORM

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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 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 01/2004) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 50,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF), ahead of the results/recommendations of ongoing assessments. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are needed. Currently it is planned that this operation will be reported on through the DREF update.

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The Situation

The Philippines, particularly prone to natural disasters, has been struck by a typhoon and tropical storm in recent days, bringing widespread death and destruction. First to hit was Typhoon Muifa, sweeping through the Bicol regions and Southern Tagalog, rapidly followed by tropical depression Violeta, triggering flash floods in Aurora province.

Muifa subsequently made a second pass through Camarines Sur, Sorsogon, Catanduanes and Mindoro Oriental provinces, wreaking further havoc. More than 106,000 families (some 573,000 people) have been affected. According to figures from the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), 74 persons are dead, with 96 injured and 62 reported missing; the death toll may rise further as searches continue for those currently unaccounted for. Nearly 21,000 houses are totally destroyed with damage to a further 50,700. Eleven evacuation centres for the homeless have been established by local authorities in the stricken areas.

In Camarines Sur, the PNRC chapter has reported an outbreak of typhoid fever with 14 confirmed cases and 83 cases still under observation. The PNRC Mindoro Oriental chapter has identified the three towns of Bongabong, Mansalay and Roxas as particularly badly hit, with more than 13,000 families (45,600 people) across 49

communes affected, some 8,400 houses totally destroyed, and damage to a further 7,093. Seventeen persons are confirmed dead, 45 injured, and 38 are missing. While power supplies in the affected areas are cut-off, roads still remain passable to all types of vehicles.

The Cantaduanes chapter has reported that some 4,400 families (21,800) persons are affected in eight towns, with more than 420 houses totally destroyed and damage to around 3,900; two persons are confirmed dead and two injured.

Reports from the PNRC chapter in Aurora, following flash flooding brought about by tropical depression Violeta, confirm 25 persons dead, with 14 injured and nine still missing; more than 300 houses are destroyed and 630 damaged. Power supplies have been cut due to falling electrical posts and damage to main power facilities, with a number of roads impassable due to landslides. Local government units in the municipalities of Baler and San Luis are providing food assistance in the worst affected areas, helping nearly 500 families to date. The towns of Dingalan and Baler remain isolated.

Massive flooding in Nueva Ecija had also been reported with water levels rising to the rooftops. Nearly 1,800 families (7,900 persons) are affected in six towns and one city. With water levels subsiding, the Bongabong bridge is now passable, though other crossings in the area are not.

Search and rescue operations are being conducted by the national disaster coordinating council through the police and military authorities, with navy rubber boats and air force helicopters searching for missing fisherman.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

At the onset of these severe events, three PNRC disaster response teams (DRT) were deployed in Mindoro Oriental to conduct evacuations, provide first aid, assess the damage and determine the needs of the affected population in the towns of Mansalay, Bongabong and Pinamalayan.

The Federation's Southeast Asia regional delegation's disaster management unit programme officer, who is out-posted in the Philippines, is now in Mindoro Oriental to assist the society with the assessment. A chapter DRT in Mindoro Oriental has also been deployed to Roxas, charged with providing relief assistance and helping conduct detailed assessment and needs analysis.

To date, some 1,740 families (nearly 10,000 people) have received food assistance (rice, sardines and noodles) from local PNRC chapters.

At the society's national headquarters in Manila, round-the-clock monitoring is underway through the disaster management operation centre. Cash advances of PHP 50,000 (CHF 1,020), from the society's disaster management services department, and 100 sacks of rice (through a local branch of the National Food Authority) have been made available to each of the PNRC chapters in Camarines Sur, Mindoro Oriental and Catanduanes.

Earlier this week, the PNRC held a media briefing at its national headquarters office and asked for support to sustain its relief operations for more than 17,000 families most affected by Muifa in Camarines Sur and Mindoro Oriental. The PNRC chairman stressed the urgent need for funding of PHP 16.7 million (CHF 665,555) to provide beneficiaries with a range of items, including food, water, medicines and clothing. Reimbursement is sought for the CHF 50,000 released from the Federation's DREF.

Coordination with the relevant national and local authorities and other partner agencies in disaster management is also being maintained, while PNRC headquarters awaits the preliminary findings from the DRT assessment to finalise the level of support to stricken areas. The evolving situation is also being closely monitored by the Federation's Southeast Asia delegation in Bangkok and the Operations Support Department (OSD) in the Geneva Secretariat.

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