

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Philippines: Ferry accident

Information bulletin n° 1
8 September 2009

This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation.

Up to nine people, including a child, were drowned when the 7,268 tonne Super Ferry 9 travelling from General Santos City to Iloilo City tilted and later, sank off the coast of Zamboanga on the morning of 6 September 2009. More than 900 passengers and crew have been rescued with one person reported still missing.

The situation

The 7,268 tonne Super Ferry 9 carrying 847 passengers, 113 crew members and four sea marshals left the southern port city of General Santos on Saturday evening, 5 September 2009. The ferry was scheduled to arrive in Iloilo City late Sunday, 6 September but encountered difficulties approximately 15 kilometres from the nearest shore around dawn on 6 September.

According to media reports, the tilting of the ferry was felt around midnight but brooked no cause for alarm. Some hours later at around 0400 hours on 6 September, the ship sent a distress signal while listing off the coast of Zamboanga Del Norte en route to Iloilo City. [<click for a map of the ferry route>](#)

According to a spokesperson from the Naval department, the Super Ferry 9 tilted after encountering giant waves off Zamboanga Del Norte. Passengers were ordered to wear life jackets. Both passengers and crew members were ordered by the captain to abandon ship. Life rafts were deployed for passenger safety. Approximately five hours after the distress call was sent, the Super Ferry 9 sank at 0842 hours. The crew members were the last to abandon ship prior to its sinking.

Evacuation of 630 people from the ferry was made before it sank completely. These rescued passengers were transferred to two commercial ships in the vicinity along with one naval gunboat and one fishing boat.

As of 1500 hours on 6 September 2009, 900 of the 964 people were rescued. Figures are being verified as there were several vessels involved in the search and rescue mission. Most of the survivors were taken to Zamboanga City where they were provided with the necessary emergency assistance and support. Shortly after receiving the distress call from the sinking ferry, the navy dispatched naval vessels and aircraft to the site. Two air force helicopters and one naval plane were dispatched for the search and rescue operation. Media reports indicate that American troops providing training to Philippine troops also dispatched a civilian helicopter and five boats with paramedics for the operation.

In the meantime, the department of social welfare and development has begun a critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) of the survivors from the Super Ferry 9. This enhanced critical incident stress debriefing is to provide emotional and psychological support to individuals and families in stressful situations in order to assist them in overcoming and relieving related anxiety.

As of 1000 hours on 8 September, the number of people rescued has reached 957 people, with one fatality and one person missing.

The undersecretary of transportation has announced that the board of marine enquiry's investigations into the cause of the ferry sinking are ongoing, given the lack of apparent signs of explosion or sabotage.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) operation centre duty personnel responded upon hearing the news on Sunday morning. Immediate alerts were sent to PNRC chapters in Zamboanga City, Zamboanga Del Norte, Zamboanga Sibugay and General Santos City. The chapters immediately deployed staff and volunteers who are trained in search and rescue, first aid and physiological support, along with ambulances and other rescue vehicles.

Necessary assistance was provided to those affected among the rescued passengers who arrived at the shoreline. The duty personnel manning the operations centre at the national headquarters in Manila stayed in constant touch with the chapters in the affected areas and monitored the situation throughout the operation. The leadership of the PNRC were in touch with the chapters in the affected areas to ensure that the various services were provided to those affected.

National headquarters action

The PNRC national headquarters activated the relevant chapters and instructed them to set up welfare desks at the ports of Zamboanga City, Zamboanga Del Norte (Siocon and Sirawai), General Santos City and Iloilo to provide first aid, ambulance services, psychosocial support, tracing and family unification services.

In order to support the tracing and family reunification services at the welfare desks, the disaster management services unit coordinated with the corporate social responsibility arm of SMART Communications in partnership to provide free calls to rescued passengers and their families. At 1300 hours on 6 September, free call centres operated by PNRC volunteers and staff, and the communications company's technical people, were set up in Zamboanga City, Iloilo City and General Santos City.

Chapter actions

To date, the consolidated actions of the PNRC chapters include:

- 401 rescued passengers and relatives were assisted and provided free call services.
- 98 injured and unwell passengers who were rescued, received first aid while 45 of them were provided ambulance services and taken to different hospitals in Zamboanga City.
- 108 relatives of passengers rescued and these passengers themselves were provided with psychosocial support.
- 60 rescued passengers were housed at the Red Cross hostel in Zamboanga while awaiting transport to their respective provinces.
- 35 family relatives were provided hot meals in Iloilo City while awaiting news of passengers rescued.
- PNRC chapters facilitated the information on rescued passengers, sharing information from chapter to chapter

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- Philippine National Red Cross: Gwendolyn T. Pang, secretary-general;
email: gwenpang@redcross.org.ph, pnrchq@redcross.org.ph; phone: +632 525 5654;
fax: +632 527 0857
- Federation country office, Philippines: Selvaratnam Sinnadurai, head of country office,
email: selvaratnam.sinnadurai@ifrc.org; phone: +63 527 0000, ext. 155, mobile: +6391 7880 6844
- Federation Southeast Asia regional office, Bangkok (ph: +662 661 8201; fax: +662 661 9322)
 - Alan Bradbury, head of regional office, email: alan.bradbury@ifrc.org
 - Patrick Fox, head of regional disaster management unit,
email: patrick.fox@ifrc.org, mobile: +66 818 557 683
- Federation Asia Pacific zone office, Kuala Lumpur:
 - Jagan Chapagain, deputy head of zone office, email: jagan.chapagain@ifrc.org
 - Penny Elghady, resource mobilization and PMER coordinator,
email: penny.elghady@ifrc.org; phone: +603 9207 5775, fax: +603 2161 0670
Please send all pledges of funding to zonerm.asiapacific@ifrc.org

[<map below; click to return to title page>](#)



Philippines: Ferry accident



★ Capitals

— Rivers