

# ***PHILIPPINES: TYPHOON***

*15 October 1998*

## ***Information Bulletin N° 1***

### ***The Disaster***

Barely three weeks after the north-western region of the Philippine island of Luzon was ravaged by tropical storm *Gading* (*Vicki*), typhoon *Zeb* made a landfall over Isabela (on the north-eastern part of Luzon) yesterday morning. It spawned whirl-winds and strong rains which resulted in floods, landslides, and extensive destruction to agriculture and other rural infrastructure.

At the time of writing, *Zeb* was moving towards the South China Sea (further information on the impact of the typhoon on Taiwan is currently being sought), but had already devastated a large area in northern Luzon; sustained winds of 165 kph and gusts of up to 200 kph were recorded. Severe storm warnings are still in effect over Cagayan, Isabela, Kalinga Apayao, Mountain Province, Ifugao, Ilocos provinces, Abra, La Union and Benguet. Pangasinan, which was badly hit by storm *Gading*, is also under the severe storm alert.

Initial field reports from the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) and the National Disaster Co-ordinating Council (NDCC) indicate that at least 12 people have died (though recent reports through Alert Net give a higher number of 43) and as many as 97,000 people have been affected in 24 municipalities. Data produced by PNRC assessment teams suggest that as many as 829 houses have been seriously damaged and that crop damage may mean losses of up to CHF 1.7m for farmers. Meanwhile, the governmental authorities expect the full scope of the disaster to be considerably greater when access to an area cut off by fallen trees, landslides and other obstacles is regained.

### ***Government Action***

The government has been quick to respond in the following areas:

- evacuating families to public schools, town halls, community centres and churches has been on-going since the late afternoon on Wednesday;
- local health and welfare departments have been mobilised to extend basic relief such as food, medicines and clothing to victims of the disaster in the evacuation centres;
- rescue teams and equipment from the Armed Forces and government units have been deployed in Central Luzon as a contingency measure. Local public works officials are clearing roads from fallen posts, trees and debris.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

The Philippine National Red Cross Society, in close co-ordination with the government (through the NDCC), mobilised teams from the Chapter and Headquarter levels. Specifically:

- response teams from 11 PNRC Chapters were deployed to assist in the evacuation of people whose homes have been flooded;
- response teams carried out a rapid damage assessment and identified the immediate needs; data from the teams was made available within 24 hours of the onset of the typhoon;
- through its 11 Chapters, the PNRC has distributed emergency food supplies and family packs to 588 families (2,853 persons); these Chapters are still in the field distributing relief assistance to the evacuated families;
- a Response Team from the National Headquarters left on 16 October to assist with the operation and to undertake a more detailed assessment of damage and needs in north-eastern Luzon; a further team will be dispatched for north-western Luzon, including Pangasinan;
- the PNRC headquarters drafted a detailed Information Bulletin and forwarded it to the Federation Regional Delegation in Kuala Lumpur (which forms the basis of this document).

## ***Conclusion***

The typhoon has caused serious damage over a large area of northern Luzon both compounding difficulties brought by tropical storm *Gading* and at a time when farmers were due to harvest the rice crop. Whilst early information clearly indicates widespread damage and loss of life and materials, the full extent of the picture is expected to be significantly worse.

The government and PNRC have responded rapidly, to meet some of the initial emergency needs. The needs of farmers, fishermen and other people living on the margin of poverty, particularly, are likely to be considerable.

As PNRC teams battle to access remote areas and to provide further information, the International Federation remains prepared to launch an Appeal if required.

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