

Information bulletin

Philippines: Typhoon Washi

Information bulletin n° 1

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This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Philippine Red Cross (PRC) is currently undertaking rescue and emergency operations. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and partner national societies with offices in-country are on standby for joint assessments and to support PRC action if required.

Summary

Typhoon Washi (local name: Sendong) pounded southern Philippines on the evening of 17 December 2011 bringing heavy rains and strong winds which resulted in massive flooding and landslides in the Northern Mindanao area. According to the national disaster risk reduction and management council (NDRRMC), as of 06:00 local time, 19 December, a total of 24,700 families equivalent to some 135,100 persons have been affected with 8,100 families (45,000 persons) currently being served in 47 evacuation centres. Current figures show Typhoon Washi has left 533 persons dead, 16 injured and 309 missing with 432 rescued survivors.

The Philippine Red Cross (PRC) operations centre has been monitoring the situation since the typhoon entered the Philippine area of responsibility. It has distributed disaster bulletins to its chapters, especially to those who were located at the typhoon track. At the onset of the disaster, PRC swiftly deployed emergency response units and Red Cross 143 volunteers in Cagayan de Oro and nearby chapters. Alongside rescue operations, the Cagayan de Oro, Dumaguete and Iligan Red Cross chapters provided hot meals to some 2,300 persons and food items to 828 persons. PRC has also put up first aid and welfare desks at the evacuation centres to support those affected.

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The situation

Typhoon Washi (local name: Sendong) struck southern Philippines on the evening of Saturday, 17 December 2011. With maximum winds of 65 km/hr and gusts of up to 80 km/hr, the storm made landfall in the Northern Mindanao area, bringing heavy rains and strong winds resulting in massive flooding and landslides. Road sections and bridges were damaged; electricity and communication lines disrupted; and domestic flights cancelled. The Dumaguete City and Valencia municipality (both in the Negros Oriental province) have been declared under a state of calamity. The typhoon entered the Philippine area of responsibility on 15 December at the CARAGA region, traversing through Northern Mindanao, Central Visayas, Western Visayas and made its exit through the Palawan area. As of the evening of 18 December, it had moved out of the Philippine area of responsibility.

According to the national disaster agency, national disaster risk reduction and management council (NDRRMC), Typhoon Washi has left 533 persons dead, 16 injured and 309 missing with 432 survivors rescued. A total of 1,334 houses have been completely damaged while 3,070 others have been partially damaged. In Surigao del Sur in particular, located in the CARAGA region, agricultural damages are reported at worth more than PHP 1.2 billion (estimated at some CHF 25.7 million or USD 27.5 million)

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Table 1. Effects of Typhoon Washi – as of 19 December 2011, 06:00 (source: NDRRMC)

Details	Total
Deaths	533
Injured	16
Missing	309
Rescued	432
# of evacuation centres	47
# of families in evacuation centres (persons)	8,128 (44,976)
Persons affected	Total # of families (persons)
Central Visayas (2 provinces)	7,310 (36,550)
Zamboanga Peninsula (1 province)	528 (1,607)
Northern Mindanao (4 provinces)	14,627 (85,601)
Davao Region (2 provinces)	910 (4,550)
CARAGA (2 provinces)	1,304 (6,781)
Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (1 province)	1 (5)
Total # of affected persons	24,680 (135,094)
Totally damaged houses	1,334
Partially damaged houses	3,070
Total # of damaged houses	4,404

According to a PRC staff who is currently on the ground, two of the main problems are identifying and burying of those who have died. Affected family members do not have resources to pay the funeral parlours and these funeral parlors are also facing a shortage of coffins. In one funeral parlor in Iligan city, there are some 20 to 30 bodies for embalming.

Some media reports have suggested authorities are considering mass burials in an effort to avoid the health risks posed by unclaimed bodies and to reduce the pressure on overwhelmed morgues. PRC, on its part, is working to help expedite the release of identified bodies to the respective family members.

IFRC's position is that people have a right to know what happened to their family members, to retrieve their bodies and to bury their dead. Government authorities will be taking every measure to ensure that family members are able to identify and retrieve their mortal remains. Aside from health issues, the greater concern is the psychological impact that uncollected dead bodies may have on the surviving members of an affected community, particularly those family members whose relatives remain missing.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The PRC operations centre has been monitoring the situation since Typhoon Washi entered Philippine territory, and has issued advisories and regular updates to its chapters in the projected typhoon path. At the onset of the disaster, PRC swiftly deployed emergency response units and Red Cross 143 volunteers in Cagayan de Oro and nearby chapters. At the moment, there are more than 600 Red Cross staff and volunteers on the ground assessing the situation.

Alongside rescue operations, the Cagayan de Oro, Dumaguete and Iligan chapters provided hot meals to 2,333 persons and food items to 828 persons. PRC has also set up first aid and welfare desks at the evacuation centres to provide necessary services to those affected.

The PRC chairman and the IFRC country representative are currently on the ground mainly gathering information on what the needs are and where they are needed. Through PRC, IFRC dispatched 2,000 pre-positioned stocks of non-food items from Manila. More items will be dispatched for distribution in the days to come.

In addition, ICRC dispatched 3,000 hygiene kits, food items and non-food items from its warehouse in Davao. Plans have advanced to distribute food packages and relief supplies such as blankets and sleeping mats. The national headquarters is coordinating response efforts while continuing to monitor the situation.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation, please contact:

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IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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IFRC's work is guided by [Strategy 2020](#) which puts forward three strategic aims:

- 1.** Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
 - 2.** Enable healthy and safe living.
 - 3.** Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.
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