

SITUATION

In the afternoon of Thursday the 16 December 2021, the region of CARAGA and other affected regions in the Philippines, was battered by catastrophic winds sustained at 195 kilometers per hour with gusts of up to 270 km/h brought by Super Typhoon Rai (local name: Odette). Typhoon Rai, a category 5 typhoon in its initial landfall, wreaked havoc in several regions and made landfall in a number of areas in Mindanao and Visayas (southern Philippines) and parts of Luzon. According to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), Typhoon Rai has killed at 31 people and displaced 488,463 persons, with numbers still increasing as reports from the local government units continue to pour in. The typhoon left the Philippine area of responsibility on Saturday afternoon, 18 December.

Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal 4 was raised in several provinces which meant very destructive typhoon-force winds were experienced. Floodwaters in some areas reached chest-high and some even reaching the roofs of many houses, inundating many low-lying communities. Flashfloods and storm surges were reported in coastal areas. Houses and infrastructure, as well as agricultural lands were devastated. There were power outages and downed telecommunication lines caused by heavy rains and strong winds, making it very challenging to get information on the damages in badly affected areas, particularly small islands.

More people are likely to be directly impacted by the typhoon in the coming days. UN OCHA Philippines noted that over 13 million people live in the worst affected areas. About 3.5 million of those are the most vulnerable including 1.2 million children.

Evacuation centers for the typhoon affected families are being updated since some of them were used as isolation facilities to those who contracted COVID-19. Since the Omicron variant was just detected in the country, there is a possibility of an outbreak if the cases will not be detected and contained. Meanwhile, the supposed mass COVID-19 vaccination drive in most of the country was postponed due to the storm.

The Philippines is the ninth country most-prone to the impacts of climate change, and the poor communities are the ones mostly experiencing the brunt of extreme climate-induced weather events.

NEEDS

The typhoon has put several regions in the Philippines in a state of crisis. Initial assessment and based on similar disasters in the past, affected people will need food and shelter materials, especially those where their houses have been severely damaged. It is expected that health services, safe drinking water will be difficult to access while livelihood activities will be affected.

The dire situation is further compounded for the typhoon affected people with vulnerabilities; more specifically for the elderly as they are still threatened with the vulnerability to COVID-19 virus should there be an outbreak in the evacuation sites. There is a pressing necessity to provide immediate assistance to minimize loss of life and to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are covered first.

STAKEHOLDERS

The National Government is leading the response. The NDRRMC issued and raised red alert status on its operation centers for monitoring and immediate disaster response. Meanwhile, the Department of Social Welfare and Development had prepared food and non-food items to assist the families affected by the weather disturbance. The Philippine Coast Guard and the military have been conducting search and rescue activities. The NDRRMC also has activated the response clusters led by various government agencies to offer assistance in the affected regions.

The Philippine Red Cross emergency teams and volunteers across eastern areas of the country are working around the clock to preposition rescue vehicles, first aid teams, evacuation, and safety equipment as well as relief supplies including pre-prepared meals and drinking water.

National humanitarian organizations are doing assessments on the ground and are continuously coordinating with the local authorities. Assessment data are being shared among the organizations to not duplicate the process and are planning to augment the efforts of the Philippine Government.

Big shopping malls also opened their doors for citizens seeking shelter, providing free WiFi, charging stations, overnight parking, and other services from designated mall help desks. Other private groups have been calling for in-kind and cash donations to help the survivors of the said typhoon.

ACT Alliance

The National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), a member of ACT Alliance, has been working in the Philippines since 1966, now helping/planning to help people affected by the typhoon. NCCP's network members are present in the affected areas and are currently assessing the impact of the disaster. NCCP and other faith-based groups through the Philippine FBO Forum are coordinating the assessment and monitoring efforts with its international and local partners. Local church networks are closely monitoring the situation and have started to coordinate with the local government units. Some churches in the affected regions have opened their doors to serve as temporary shelters for those who need to evacuate.

NCCP will assess the possibility to raise an appeal.

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