

Situation Overview

Response efforts are underway after Super Typhoon Goni (local name Rolly) left a trail of extensive damage after sweeping across southern Luzon on 1 November. The Bicol Region bore the brunt of the typhoon's violent winds and torrential rains, blowing away roofs, toppling structures and causing severe flooding and landslides.

The strongest tropical cyclone this year made its first landfall as a super typhoon with maximum winds of 225 km/h in Bato, Catanduanes. Response teams are prioritizing access to the island province as getting information proved to be difficult with communication and electricity cut off. In a government press briefing today, the province's governor reported via satellite phone that at least 10,000 houses were either destroyed or damaged while 11 towns remain inaccessible.

The typhoon then hit the town of Tiwi, causing rivers to overflow and flooding most parts of Albay province. The province is also home to the active Mayon Volcano, with lahar deposits on its slopes liquifying as mud flows and burying at least 300 houses in Guinobatan. Eleven people were reported killed in Catanduanes and Albay provinces from the onslaught of the typhoon. Numbers are expected to increase in the coming days.

Government and humanitarian teams are currently on the ground assessing the destruction. The Department of Agriculture reports that 16,900 hectares of land are damaged, affecting 18,000 farmers. Initial estimates place production losses at 66,600 metric tons of rice, corn and high-value crops, amounting to US\$24 million in value.

Goni made two other landfalls in Quezon and Batangas province, progressively weakening as it traversed the entire day and sparing the capital Metro Manila. All storm warning signals have been lifted as Goni left the landmass and entered the West Philippine Sea on Monday morning.

Compounding effects on COVID-19 and other health emergencies

Preparedness and response efforts are made complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Bicol region currently has 425 active COVID-19 cases per the latest Department of Health (DOH) data, the risk of transmission remains high, especially in typically crowded evacuation centres. DOH reminded local governments to deploy safety officers that will check sanitation and monitor COVID symptoms among the IDPs. The main COVID-19 laboratory in the Bicol region was also damaged, prompting the suspension of testing. At least 1,000 COVID-19 patients under quarantine in mega-treatment facilities around Metro Manila have been transferred to hospitals and hotels.

As government and humanitarian teams respond to the needs, the health department issued an advisory that humanitarian responders do not need to undergo PCR test. Responders may be deployed under the conditions that they have no symptoms and recent exposure to a COVID-19 case and have been cleared by a medical doctor.

The power interruptions in several areas could affect cold chain facilities used for the national immunization campaign. The successive typhoons also resulted in low coverage of the measles and polio campaign, which is being implemented in Regions IV-B and V until 26 November.

Government preparedness and response

Local governments pre-emptively evacuated some 457,000 people ahead of the landfall. As of the latest situation report of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), 361,000 people are being served in 2,285 evacuation centres in Regions II, III, IV-A, IV-B and V, while another 54,400 are hosted by relatives and friends. UNICEF reported that 1,077 schools are used as evacuation centres.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), as NDRRMC Response Cluster lead, said that it has a total of \$18.3 million in standby funds available, including 267,000 family food packs. Delivery of family food packs from the national warehouse to Catanduanes and Albay is scheduled on 3 November. National assessment teams are also anticipated to be deployed to Catanduanes on 4 November to begin damage and needs assessments.

Utility companies are restoring water, electricity and communication lines in 147 areas across the affected areas.

Humanitarian Country Team response efforts

The United Nations (UN) and humanitarian partners in the Philippines are mobilizing to support the national response to assist communities. The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator confirmed to the Government of the Philippines the readiness of the humanitarian community to support national response efforts. The Humanitarian Country Team met on 2 November to discuss its strategic response direction and next moves.

The Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office (APSEMO) requested technical support in assessing the impact of the typhoon. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and World Food Programme (WFP), is leading an inter-agency assessment in the province, together with NGOs, CSOs and church groups.

IOM is providing support to the authorities in the management of evacuation centers and donated 500 modular tents to DSWD, and with support of USAID will provide 300 shelter-grade tarpaulins and protective equipment for Albay. An IOM team is also conducting assessment on shelter damages in Batangas and Laguna provinces.

WFP received a request from DSWD and will deploy 35 trucks for movement of Food and Non-Food items (NFI) in the affected areas. The private sector, through the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation, is also supporting in logistics and has mobilized its member agencies for the restoration of mobile communications and power.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) responded to the request of Albay to provide satellite imagery of affected areas. UNDP has an existing partnership with the provincial government and indicated that a livelihood assessment will be conducted to support recovery efforts. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization will support the agriculture department in assessing the damage to agriculture and in the rehabilitation of agri-facilities. UNICEF has pre-positioned WASH items, tents for child-friendly spaces, and education materials which could be released to partners when requested.

IFRC released 1,000 NFI kits from its warehouse in Cebu City which have been dispatched to Catanduanes, while another 1,000 NFI kits from Manila will be sent to other areas in the Bicol Region. The Philippine Red Cross deployed search and rescue teams in flooded communities and continues to provide relief assistance and psycho-social support to displaced people in evacuation centers. IFRC released a Disaster Relief Emergency Fund allocation to support the operations of the national Red Cross and plans to soon issue an appeal.

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