This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Philippine Red Cross (PRC), with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time. However, this might change as the situation evolves, especially after the information on impact of the storm is more available.

<click here for detailed contact information>

The situation

On 12 January 2020, the Department of Science and Technology’s Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (DOST- PHIVOLCS) raised an Alert Level 4 after increasing activity of Taal Volcano, which is located on the island of Luzon in Batangas, CALABARZON (Region IV-A). An Alert Level 4 means that a hazardous explosive eruption is possible within hours to days; and warrants a “Danger Zone” of up to 14 kilometres from the Main Crater. Taal Volcano is amongst the most active volcanoes in the Philippines, with more than 30 reported eruptions. According to DOST- PHIVOLCS, eruptive activity at Taal Volcano Main Crater has intensified, with continuous eruptions generating a 10 – 15 kilometres of steam laden cloud of super-heated ash, with frequent volcanic lightning that has rained wet ashfall as far as Quezon City, some 100 kilometres away.

Volcanic tremors have been reported, with volcanic earthquakes measuring magnitude 2.5 and 3.9 felt at Intensity III (Weak) in Batangas province. As of 19:00 hrs (local time) on 12 January 2020, power supplies in areas of Batangas in the vicinity of Taal Volcano have been disrupted, and roads are impassable. Taal Volcano is situated on Volcano Island, an island near the middle Taal Island, and is listed as a “Permanent Danger Zone”, with permanent settlement on the island not recommended. Though a larger volcanic eruption at Taal is currently unlikely, precautionary evacuations of at-risk communities living the cities of Lipa and Tanauan; as well as municipalities of Agoncillo, Balete, Cuenca, San Nicholas and Talisay with a combined total population of approximately 161,427, have been initiated on the advice of DOST- PHIVOLCS. Total of nine (9) evacuation centres (EC) have been established. Areas north
of Taal Volcano are being advised to guard against the effects of heavy and prolonged ashfall. It is expected that eruptions could continue for up to three months, and impact on the provinces of Batangas, Cavite and Laguna, as well as nearby regions including Metro Manila.

In Metro Manila, light ash fall has been reported, which may result in traffic disruptions. The Manila International Airport Authority has announced that all flights are on hold at Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), including both arrivals and departures due to volcanic ashfall. Local Government authorities (LGA) across Metro Manila have begun to recommend staying inside due to the potential respiratory issues from the ashfall, while municipal authorities have also begun announcing class suspensions from 13 January 2020.

**Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

In accordance with the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) standard operating procedures (SOP), the Operations Centre (OpCen), which functions 24/7, is on heightened alert. The Red Cross Action Teams (RCAT 143) are on standby. National Disaster Response Teams (NDRT), Emergency Response Units (ERU), health and welfare personnel have also been alerted, for possible deployment. The PRC Batangas chapter has mobilized assets and personnel in the at-risk areas, this includes the following actions:

- Mobilized chapter level Rapid Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis (RDANA) team to support evacuations and conduct assessments.
- Established welfare desks to provide first aid, psychosocial support (PSS) and restoring family links (RFL) services and put a hot meals van on standby.
- Deployed four (4) ambulances (Batangas – three (3); and Cavite – One (1)); and put on standby two (2) ambulances, one (1) 6x6 truck, rescue truck, and five (5) multipurpose vehicles.
- Initiated the mobilization of 400 sets of prepositioned personal protective equipment (PPE), including eye goggles and dust masks,
- Deployed four (4) ambulances to the at risk-area and initiated connections with medical facilities in a surrounding 10 kilometres radius for referrals, if required.

The National Headquarters (NHQ) has alerted neighbouring chapters (Laguna, Lucena and Quezon) for possible support, if required. It is anticipated that there will be deployment of emergency medical units (tents and operational support), as well as expansion of welfare services including child friendly spaces, hot meals, PSS; and water and sanitation support. The PRC communications teams will post updates and photos of the situation on Facebook and Twitter.

The IFRC Philippines Country Office (CO) is continuing to monitor the situation in close contact with its counterparts in the PRC NHQ. The IFRC Philippines CO has also checked preparedness stocks and alerted its National Society staff and delegates for possible deployment. In addition, the CO is also issuing safety and security advice in view of the ashfall that is affecting Metro Manila.
In 2019 – 20, PRC has been managing operations supported through the IFRC DREF and Emergency Appeal (EA) mechanisms in response to earthquakes (e.g. Batanes and Mindanao), typhoons (i.e. Kammuri, Mangkhut and Phanfone) and disease outbreaks (e.g. dengue, measles and polio).

Click here to return to the title page

Contact information

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How we work

All IFRC 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 the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The 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.