



NDYS in Action, Newsletter

Natural Disaster Youth Summit Monthly News

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The VOICE of YOUTH is NEEDED!

Editor: Daniel Paz,
Salta, Argentina



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Philippines and a very sad death toll.

Philippines and a very sad death toll

At least eight people have drowned and more than 375,000 been affected by massive flooding after heavy rains continued on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, according to disaster relief officials on 3 August. Many are among the tens of thousands already displaced by heavy fighting between government forces and the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Maguindanao Province now living in government evacuation centers.

Regional emergency relief groups have also been told to be on alert for possible outbreaks of waterborne diseases. Some 30 towns and one city in five provinces have been submerged since last week, the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) in Manila said.



This is the island affected by the massive floods.

Heavy flooding began on 25 July, affecting some 56 villages on Mindanao Island. But as rains continued, major waterways also flooded their banks, and within days more and more areas, especially in low-lying catch basins in central Mindanao, were also inundated, the agency said.

Officials said hardest hit was the coastal province of Sarangani, where most of the deaths were recorded. Provincial welfare officer Hermelo Latoja said flash floods swept away wooden homes along the banks in the town of Malapatan, while almost 80 percent of all 19 villages in the area of Kiamba were submerged. "I want to ensure the safety of residents in affected villages and I want to make sure they will be given enough food and supplies in evacuation centers," said Sarangani governor Migs Dominguez, adding that health officials were also rushing medicine to evacuation centers "to make sure there will be no disease outbreaks".

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Troops meanwhile joined police and provincial rescue units to help thousands marooned inside their homes by waist-deep water in many areas of Maguindanao, where 31 villages remain submerged.

Office of Civil Defence (OCD) chief Glenn Rabonza said aerial surveys were being conducted across the flooded areas in Maguindanao and Cotabato city. He mentioned a task force may carry out "forced evacuations by troops if necessary". He said more than 1,200 families had been evacuated from their homes, while helicopters were continuing to search for those in need. Damage has been extensive - in South Cotabato and Cotabato provinces alone, more than 2,700ha of rice, vegetables and fruit trees have been washed away, while over 100 houses have been destroyed. Schools, dikes and roads have also been eroded, officials said.

Major Randolph Cabangbang, a regional military spokesman in Mindanao, said troops had been ordered to be ready for quick mobilization throughout the region. "Rapid deployment forces are already out there helping out," said Cabangbang. He said many bridges and roads remained inaccessible due to the flood waters, forcing them to use rubber boats to access some villages. "We are continuing to monitor the weather," he added.

Mindanao has been the scene of heavy fighting between government forces and the 12,000-strong MILF over the past year following the collapse of a peace deal last August, resulting in thousands of people being displaced. The MILF have been fighting for an independent Islamic state on the island for decades. Source: www.irinnews.org

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Topics

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Conarky residents need urgent help.

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Mariama has a stunned expression as she tells how a wall fell on her when she entered a house looking for a child after floodwaters burst in. She has bruises on her arms and legs and a gash on her back.

Residents of the Dabondy neighbourhood, just off the road to the airport in Guinea's capital Conakry, are appealing for help from authorities and aid organizations after torrential rains the week of 3 August flooded homes, washed away belongings and destroyed some crops locals grow nearby. "We are calling for the authorities [and anyone else of goodwill] to help us because the work needed here to avoid this flooding is colossal," said a resident named Diallo Sekou.

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The neighborhood is hit by flooding every rainy season and results get worst each time.

Dabondy residents said the area lacks the infrastructure to evacuate water. Fuel residue mixed in with debris in the area has exacerbated the blockage and hurt crops, the residents said. Other areas of Conakry saw flooding too but locals said Dabondy was hit particularly hard by the recent rains.

The mayor of Matoto – Dabondy’s district – and officials of the Health Ministry visited the area after the rains, said the residents. Locals were scheduled to meet with the governor of Conakry for a second time on 10 August to appeal for help, resident Léno Saa Christophe said. Dabondy residents are used to flooding; throughout the neighborhood footbridges of logs or pipes are laid out where standing water gets deep. Some people have built their homes with entrances two or three feet high, with wooden platforms or steps for access. The area is low-lying and water can be seen spouting up from the ground. Conakry receives abundant rains each year and some streets even in the centre of downtown turn into what look like rushing streams for hours. But 15- and 20-year residents of Dabondy added the fact that this year’s rains are the heaviest they have ever seen – and the season is not over.

Higher-than-average rainfall is expected this season in Guinea and other countries in the southern Gulf of Guinea zone, according to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). “Each year we are victims of flooding here, but this year is exceptional,” expressed a resident. “The water level has never been this high.”

Many homes were still flooded two days after the rains. Residents continue to put up sandbags and remove water from homes with buckets. One resident who gave her name as Madame Bah said the floodwaters submerged a community well and swept away the cover. The well was used for cooking and bathing water; for drinking water residents fill jerry cans at a communal tap about 5km away.

Mayor Mohamed Cherif Haïdara said that many people have built houses in lowland areas unsuitable for construction. “They did not consult anyone before building. Beyond that, many of the homes are made of banco [mud from soil mixed with other organic materials such as straw].” He said he could not comment further for now and that he expects a decision in the coming days on what steps will be taken in the area to avoid flooding in future.

Source: www.irinnews.org

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Aid development is still in the list for Myanmar.

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Myanmar is one of the least-funded countries in the world but faces a number of hurdles if it wants to receive more overseas development assistance (ODA). Donors cite the continued detention of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi as a key obstacle, along with issues of access and other restrictions on the delivery of aid.

However, the relief effort that followed Cyclone Nargis in May 2008, which left some 140,000 people dead, proved that aid can be delivered directly to those in need, agencies say. In 2007, the country received just US\$4 per person in ODA, less than any of the poorest 50 countries, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).



Thousands of children are still having classes in some monasteries and they stand the entire classes in the floor.

Cambodia and Laos – countries with similar poverty levels – received \$47 and \$68 respectively for the same time period. “I can’t speak for other donors – but I would imagine most donors do want to give more to Myanmar,” said Paul Whittingham, head of the UK’s Department for International Development in Myanmar. “But there are challenges to effective delivery,” he said, citing issues of restricted access, lack of reliable data, and a poor policy environment. However, it is the issue of Aung San Suu Kyi that appears to remain centre stage.

“Clearly it is not always possible to keep politics separate from the humanitarian priorities,” Whittingham conceded. Aung San Suu Kyi has been in detention for 14 of the past 20 years. In May she was charged with violating the terms of her house arrest and her trial has drawn international condemnation. In response, western nations, including the United States, have renewed sanctions against the country. The trial verdict is expected this month.

Aid workers in Myanmar argue that aid for the general public should not be withheld on political grounds, noting that other countries with repressive governments receive much more. “It’s a mystery to me that Myanmar gets so little in aid, considering the needs are so great,” said an NGO worker who has worked in Myanmar for 15 years. “[Donors] are so blinded by their opposition to the form of government that they forget the needs of the people.”

Medical workers estimate there are between five and 10 million malaria patients per year in Myanmar, but only a small proportion receive effective treatment. The country also has the highest rate of HIV in Southeast Asia, but anti-retroviral drugs are only available to one-fifth of those who need them. The remainder, about 60,000 people, goes untreated. And more than 30 percent of Myanmar’s children are chronically malnourished, according to the UN. Source: www.irinnews.org

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Powerful Marakot typhoon killed thousands.

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Roads were blocked and the transport of people and goods and commercialization faced a hard time.

When Typhoon Marakot struck the Philippines' main island of Luzon last week, a faulty dyke was breached, leading to massive flooding and displacing thousands. If the local government had set aside a few million pesos to repair the dyke, the disaster could have been prevented, said Richard Gordon, the main proponent of a Disaster Risk Management Bill, which if passed, will ensure municipal governments allocate at least 5 percent of their budgets to disaster risk management.

The proposed bill is one of several measures that the Philippines, one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, have announced to boost preparedness. The Philippines, a middle-income country comprising 7,000 islands, leads a World Bank list of nations most in danger of facing frequent and more intense storms because of climate change.

In 2008, it was one of three countries that experienced the most disasters, according to the Brussels-based Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters.

Provincial and municipal governments across the country are being urged to take the initiative and use their powers to forcibly evacuate residents during a natural disaster, said Glenn Rabonza, chief of Manila's Office of Civil Defence (OCD). "We are a hazard- and disaster-prone country simply and unfortunately because of our geographical location. We get about 20 or so typhoons a year, about seven of them potentially destructive," Rabonza said. Apart from the typhoons that blow in from the Pacific Ocean, the Philippines also sits on the Pacific Ring of Fire where periodic earthquakes occur, Rabonza noted. And while the country has not had one as powerful as the one that devastated Szechuan in China or Pakistan-administered Kashmir in recent years, "ours are smaller-scale, periodic and too often affect large populations", he stressed. The government also hopes to complete an updated "mapping of flood and landslide prone areas".

Early warning, forecasting and monitoring systems have been improved, with at least 10 new radars installed in the typhoon-entry zones in the eastern Bicol region to alert the populace. Gordon, who also chairs the Philippine National Red Cross, stressed that government spending on disaster prevention and preparedness measures could significantly curb the billions spent on relief and rehabilitation. "Without disaster prevention and preparedness, we will forever be pouring money into a bottomless pit and the cycle of disaster and poverty will continue," he said.

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The government is also trying to emphasize "disaster mitigation and pre-emptive evacuation", mainly because many poor residents often ignore government warnings to leave disaster-prone areas, including riversides, slopes, hills and illegal mining operations, said Rabonza.

One such area is the eastern portion of Manila, with a population of about 15 million, which sits on the West Valley or Marikina Fault. It has registered several earthquakes in the last 1,500 years. Scientists fear that if the fault moves drastically it could trigger a 7.2 magnitude quake, flattening buildings and resulting in about 35,000 deaths and injuring 100,000, Rabonza said. The private sector in Manila, including owners of major business establishments, has stepped up earthquake drills.

"We have put in place action plans already, including massive earthquake drills among schools. We are trying our best to prepare ourselves, but let's face the fact that no country, no community, no nation can be truly fully prepared if there is a sudden onset of disaster like a massive earthquake," Rabonza said. Source: www.irinnews.org

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Taiwan suffered Morakot effects

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Flags are being flown at half-mast in Taiwan as three days of mourning begin for people who lost their lives as a result of Typhoon Morakot. At least 500 people are still missing, thought killed by floods and mudslides caused by the typhoon, which was Taiwan's worst typhoon in 50 years.

President Ma Ying-jeou promised to press ahead with a programme of reconstruction and resettlement. So far the government has confirmed the deaths of 160 people in the typhoon. Opinion polls suggest President Ma's approval rating among Taiwanese voters has declined sharply following criticism of his government's slow response to the emergency.



This village resulted on this...

Among the memorial services he attended was one at Hsiaolin, perhaps the village worst affected by the typhoon. "I assure you I will complete the reconstruction and resettlement during my term and I will punish negligent officials," President Ma said at the service.

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Hundreds of the victims are believed to be buried by mud in Hsiaolin, which was almost completely covered in a mudslide triggered by several days of extremely heavy rainfall.

The president's critics, some of whom surrounded and heckled him during his visit to a shrine, point to what they see as his inability to take responsibility for a poor response to the emergency.

Three senior ministers remain in place even after offering their resignations over the official response though, correspondents say, a government re-shuffle is likely next month. Taiwan's parliament, now in recess, is due to hold an additional session in the coming days to review a special budget worth NT\$100bn (\$3bn, £1.84m) to cover typhoon relief and reconstruction. The disaster sparked a global response with at least 81 countries, the European Union, and 21 international organizations donating personnel and NT\$160m (\$4.87m, £2.95m) in relief aid to Taiwan, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Comments: I have no words to refer myself to all the things which are in this newsletter. Do we need more proves? Thousands of displaced people, thousands of death people... the panorama is not good at all. I wish all of those men, women, children, etc affected by this entire catastrophe were really considered by authorities.

Signs are very clear, what we should do is to support communication activities leaded by NGOs and the programs they develop in order to help communities giving them new knowledge.

■ **For more information please contact** ■

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"Communication saves lives!"