



TYPHOON MANGKHUT | PHILIPPINES

Catholic Relief Services and our local Catholic partners are responding to help families in Benguet and Cagayan provinces, on the northern part of Luzon island, which has been hit by a powerful typhoon.



CRS' emergency response team is assessing damage in Tuba, Benguet, which was badly affected by landslides. *Photo by Analyn Lucas/CRS*

OVERVIEW

Close to 100 people have lost their lives during Typhoon Mangkhut, which made landfall in the Philippines on September 15. The death toll is set to rise as isolated communities hit by floods and landslides are reached. Access to the most affected areas continues to be constrained by roads blocked with debris, and the threat of further landslides. Some areas can only be reached on foot. Many communities are still without power or means of communication.

With sustained winds exceeding 120 mph and gusts in excess of 155 mph, Ompong, as the typhoon is locally named, moved rapidly across the northern part of Luzon island. Over 890,000 people are directly impacted, with more than 236,000 temporarily displaced and living in evacuation centers, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Farmers in some areas are badly affected, with some losing 90 percent of their impending rice harvest.

890,000 +

PEOPLE ARE DIRECTLY IMPACTED, WITH MORE THAN 236,000 LIVING IN EVACUATION CENTERS



Global attention has focused on the town of Itogon in Benguet province. There, a mudslide buried a bunkhouse where miners and their families sought shelter, causing dozens of fatalities; 18 bodies have been recovered so far.

Families urgently need food, clean water, hygiene supplies and bedding. Road clearance is an immediate priority, and restoring shelter and livelihoods is also essential to recovery. CRS is liaising with other humanitarian agencies and the Philippine government to ensure a coordinated response.

CRS RESPONSE

CRS emergency teams are in Benguet and Cagayan provinces, two of the hardest hit areas. CRS has initiated a response, providing water purification tablets and jerry cans to 324 displaced families in Benguet, who are sheltering in evacuation centers and homes.

“We are having difficulty reaching distant villages, because of boulders, debris and landslides along the roads. Some families in evacuation centers are not sure where they will go or how they will rebuild their houses. There are evacuees who are showing signs of shock. This is the most devastating thing they’ve ever experienced,” says Aprilynn Villamar, a CRS emergency program officer, reporting from Itogon.

While the current focus is on rescue efforts and immediate aid, CRS is preparing to help families recover. Our initial response will be scaled up in the coming days to include unconditional cash transfers, shelter support, and additional water, sanitation and hygiene assistance. CRS hopes to raise an initial \$400,000 for the rapidly expanding emergency activities.

CRS is heavily invested in disaster risk reduction and preparedness activities that help communities prepare for and respond to natural disasters like this one, saving lives in the process. In partnership with Caritas Philippines and with support from Caritas Australia, CRS has carried out preparedness projects in northern Luzon for the last 3 years.

HOW TO HELP

To support the relief effort in the Philippines:

- Donate online: donate.crs.org
- Donate by phone: 1-877-HELP-CRS
- Donate by check: Catholic Relief Services
P.O. Box 17090 Baltimore, Maryland 21297-0303



Having lost their home, Ramilyn Estimada, right, and her family took refuge in her aunt’s home. CRS is helping families like Ramilyn’s with water purification and shelter kits. *Photo by CRS staff*

“ It’s difficult and heartbreaking, but life must go on.

Ramilyn Estimada, who lost her home in Tuba, Benguet province

SEVERE DAMAGE INFLICTED ON THE PHILIPPINES’ “RICE BASKET”

There are growing concerns that the storm may have a profoundly negative impact on food security nationwide. Rice is the country’s staple grain, eaten at nearly every meal. Damage to livelihoods across northern Luzon—a key rice growing area—is massive and widespread, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

As many as 1.6 million farmers and fisherfolk have been directly impacted, tons of crops lost, and 1.2 million hectares of land affected.

Though the rice harvest is just a few weeks away, most of the crop was not yet mature enough to be harvested when the typhoon hit. Even farmers who were able to harvest had to choose between risking their lives to collect what they could or evacuating to higher ground. Many poor farmers have lost everything: their homes, possessions and their sole source of income. Without help to get through the immediate catastrophe, restore their homes, and replant for the next harvest, they may never recover.

The whole country has been negatively impacted in recent months by rising food prices and rice shortages, and the impact on poor families of further price increases driven by Mangkhut could be profound.