



World Health
Organization

EMERGENCY ALERT

Health Action in Crises

PHILIPPINES FLOODS



Situation

2 December 2004 - Tropical Depression "Winnie" has triggered massive floods in northern and central Philippines. Some 400 persons are reported dead, with many people still unaccounted for. An estimated 240,000 persons have been directly affected (government figures). The most affected provinces include Isabela (Region II); Bulacan, Nueva Ecija and Aurora (Region III); Quezon and Rizal (Region IV) and Camarines Sur (Region V).

Efforts are focused on search and rescue activities. The procurement and distribution of relief items are also underway. The National Disaster Coordination Council (NDCC) is charged with heading the response, in conjunction with the Defense Department. The NDCC is supported by the UN in-country team.

Possible needs in the health sector

A comprehensive impact assessment has not yet been undertaken. However, it can be anticipated that the following issues *may be* of concern:

- Damage to health facilities and equipment, as well as disrupted medical supply systems.
- Outages in electricity endanger the cold chain.
- Relocation of people may result in an overburden of functional primary and referral health services.
- Floods and landslides could lead to the disruption of water distribution systems and the loss/contamination of water supplies. In flood situations, the lack of safe drinking water supplies and adequate sanitation, combined with population displacement, heightens the risk of outbreaks of water- and vector-borne diseases.
- Shortage of supplies and staff for mass casualty management could occur.

WHO immediate actions

WHO has mobilized US\$ 20,000 to support the assessment of urgent health needs. Medical kits are on standby and are ready to be shipped should they be needed. The WHO Country Team is in close contact with the Ministry of Health. The WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific and WHO Headquarters are closely following the situation and are ready to backstop the Country Team. An operations room in HQ has been established. We are monitoring the impact of Typhoon Nanmadol, which is hitting the eastern Philippine coast today (2 December).

The Health Action for Crises Department at WHO HQ has held discussions with the Communicable Disease Department and other technical support departments to ensure that expertise is available should it be required. If a UNDAC team is deployed, WHO has already nominated a national public health expert.

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