

Philippines: Communities severely affected in South Central Mindanao by extreme heat and absence of rainfall

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Mindanao Humanitarian Action Network Against Disasters

URGENT APPEAL FOR THE EL NINO-AFFECTED FAMILIES in South Central Mindanao, Philippines

The extreme heat and absence of rainfall since the last quarter of 2015 brought by El Niño phenomenon has severely affecting communities in South Central Mindanao particularly those which sources of living are highly dependent to agriculture and fishery.

The provinces of Sarangani, North and South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Maguindanao are among the 18 provinces in Mindanao severely hit by drought since February this year (PAGASA El Niño Advisory No. 13). A two to three percent rise in temperature had been recorded between February and March (e.g. in General Santos City, from 38.0°C to 42.0°C and in Cotabato City from 36.2°C to 39.0°C) hence, the occurrences of grass/forest fires in several areas including General Santos City, Datu Odin Sinsuat in Maguindanao, in Mt. Matutum, South Cotabato and the famous Mt. Apo in Kidapawan and Davao del Sur area. The grass and forest fires also reported to have displaced more than a hundred families.

Rice fields, cornfields and vegetable plants are extremely affected which resulted to non-production, drinking water has dried up in uphill communities including wells and streams in lowland areas, irrigation canals are empty, farm animals are dying and fish catch also becomes inadequate. Remaining plants like fruit trees, coconut tress and even backyard gardens were not spared from pests infestation particularly by rats, black bugs and worms.

These alarming situations caused extreme hunger to thousands of families. In Maguindanao alone, 23,644 farming families have been documented to have loss 26,754.09 hectares of crops in different varieties amounting to Php 124,177,875.00. Problems continue to arise when affected communities are infected with sickness and viruses related to drought like heat stroke, sore eyes, coughs and colds and skin diseases.

Cases of malnutrition increased as well particularly among women and children. In some Indigenous communities in Upi, Maguindanao poisonous root crops that need to be processed in longer period of time are processed in a shortest way just to feed the family. During the long drought in 1998, this survival method killed many IPs and is feared to happen again if the people are left with no option and the hunger situations worsen. Others opt to look for employment in cities or in other countries in whatever means available which make them vulnerable to trafficking, unfair labor treatment and

other inhumane work condition.

The drought (El Niño) situation in South Central Mindanao is even made worst in some areas particularly in Manguindanao where military operations by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) against lawless elements are on going since February 5 up to now. As of middle of March 2016, the Office of Civil Defense-Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (OCD-ARMM) reported displacements of 6,897 families or 34,485 individuals who living in evacuation sites, makeshift tents in open spaces or have sought refuge in the houses of relatives in nearby municipalities. One could imagine how difficult life is for these families (both the evacuees and the host) affected by the strong drought and conflicts.

The Local Government Units (LGUs) in Sarangani, North Cotabato, South Cotabato, Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat have independently declared their provinces State of Calamity because of the drought. Declaring a community under state of calamity should have provided LGUs with opportunity to access the Quick Response Fund (QRF) to be able to provide emergency assistance to the affected residents. However, reports from the majority of the community members attested that no relief assistance has been extended yet while others who received few kilos of rice once within the period have complained about the insufficiency of assistance if compared to the extreme hunger that they experience. It is also reported that mechanisms installed during relief distributions are problematic especially in areas with strong political rivalries, while other affected families who are in far-flung areas could hardly come due to high cost of transportation in going to the municipal centers just to receive few kilos of rice ration.

The 6,000 farmers and indigenous peoples who staged a protest in Kidapawan, North Cotabato to demand for rice are just few of the actual farmers - from communities of migrant settlers, bangsamoro and indigenous peoples who suffer from hunger due to El Niño. Number of affected communities might increase while situations could get worst as Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said that El Niño would last until June this year. With May 9, 2016 Elections on the way, the extreme difficult situation posts a great danger for affected communities to be subjected to vote buying and other political manoeuvrings.

This information above are part of the consolidated data gathered from the on going monitoring and documentation fed to the Mindanao Humanitarian Action Network against Disasters (MiHANDs) by member organizations coming from the different areas mentioned. It is in this context that MiHANDs-South Central Mindanao Cluster appeal for any support - in cash and/or in kind for a conduct of emergency response to help address the most urgent needs (e.g. food, drinking water, medicines, etc.) of the affected families in South Central Mindanao.

You may send your help and donations through MiHANDs bank account below.

Account Name : Mindanao Humanitarian Action Network

Account No. : 9353-1085-54

Bank name : Bank of Philippine Islands (BPI)

Bank Address : Quezon Avenue, Iligan City

SWIFT Code : BOIPHMM

Please notify us via email at mihands.phils@gmail.com or by calling 064 421 1369 about your donation for proper acknowledgement and accounting. We will acknowledge your support accordingly and keep you posted on the progress of our actions at our website/s.

We look forward to your immediate attention to this appeal. Thank you very much!

ESSF SUPPORT

Our association is supporting MiHANDs activities.

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Please indicate "For MiHANDs" or "For the Philippines"

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Crédit lyonnais

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10 boulevard Chanzy

93100 Montreuil

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International bank account details :

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