

# SERVE THE PEOPLE BRIGADE

## CORDILLERA DISASTER RESPONSE NETWORK

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Serve the People Brigade Reaches Out to isolated communities in Bokod and Mankayan in Benguet; *Relief and Rehab Needed In Abra, Mountain Province*

BAGUIO CITY— This week, the Serve the People Brigade Cordillera Disaster Response Network trekked dangerous roadcuts and landslides to reach Labey in Bokod municipality to distribute relief goods and conduct monitoring and documentation. **250 families from the communities of Labey, Minac, Lebeng, Banao, Adonot and Sombrero** (October 21) benefited from the relief goods generated through the solidarity and generosity of various institutions, organizations, families and individuals who donated through the Brigade. Meanwhile, **51 individuals benefited from the Brigade's medical mission** with the Community Health, Education, Services and Training in the Cordillera or CHESTCORE on October 19 in Abatan, Buguias, and a total of **171 families** were given relief goods in the areas of Paco and Suyoc in Mankayan on October 20<sup>th</sup>. Earlier on October 18, 70 families were given relief goods in Twin Peaks, Tuba. Food-for-work was also donated in Paco and Suyoc, Mankayan; Lebeng, Bokod and Twin Peaks, Tuba. As of this writing, your donations and hard-earned money has benefited a **total of 977 families in Itogon, Tublay, Tuba, Mankayan and Bokod; and 403 families in Baguio City.**



**Mudslide at Twin Peaks, Tuba, Benguet**

In all the relief missions the Brigade undertakes, it is made a point to discuss to the community the causes of the environmental disasters besetting the world for a greater understanding of climate change. Also, **what is notable in the Cordillera is the practice of indigenous systems of disaster/emergency response such as the *ub-obfo* and *mabtad*.** Part of the processing and debriefing of the volunteers for instance in Tadian included the **cleansing rituals.**

### PROVINCIAL UPDATES

#### **Benguet:**

#### **Twin Peaks, Tuba**

At Twin Peaks Barangay, 7 individuals were reported missing by local officials while 4 are injured and 1 remains missing from flashfloods and the river that overflowed. Seven houses were totally washed out by the strong rains and mudslide. A total of 43 families are affected by the havoc wrought by Pepeng. To date, there is still no electricity. At the barangay information center, mothers and grandmothers relayed how they scampered

for safety amid mudslides, while carrying their children or grandchildren. They showed Brigade members wounds they acquired in the evening of October 8. Community members have already trooped to Sison, Pangasinan to continue searching for the missing. One mother quipped, “We are still afraid that another disaster will happen. Each night, just a small sound from the mountains brings us running outside of our houses with our flashlights to check our surroundings and run to safety.” The community is still in need of food supplies and candles.

Medical volunteers and CHESTCORE have started conducting community debriefing at Twin Peaks including San Jose area in La Trinidad on October 21 and at the Alejo Pacalso National Highschool in Itogon on October 18. This is in collaboration with the Baguio Benguet Mental Health Support Group.

### **Buguias and Mankayan**

51 individuals in the Abatan-Guinaoang communities benefited from the Brigade’s medical mission. In the community of Sharp Curve, 27 casualties were documented while 29 were injured from the massive landslide in the evening of October 8. As of October 22, 2 more bodies were retrieved according to local sources. 12 houses are totally damaged while 10 are partially damaged. The irrigation in Kitang was destroyed while 5 foot bridges from Buknet to Gal-udan, and from Buknet to Pusong, were washed out. Around 400 hectares of vegetable gardens were submerged in Abatan, while 8 fishponds were flooded. Clearly, local livelihood was destroyed. Around 300 individuals evacuated into the homes of their relatives. In Paco, a barangay official expressed thanks to the Brigade for having been the first to extend relief to Mankayan.

In Gueday, Suyoc, Mankayan, 4 houses were totally damaged. In Paco of the same municipality, 4 houses were totally damaged with 5 partially damaged; 4 houses are hanging in Palpaltugan while 2 houses are damaged in San Roque. The airport pathway, Guina-ang Village pathway, Pukitan water tank, Guiamas and Pukitan riprap, Upper Paalaban pathway and other infrastructure were destroyed.



**Road crack in Saddle, Atok; The massive landslide in Mankayan that claimed 27 lives; 51 patients benefited from the Brigade's medical mission**

### **Bokod**

The Brigade specifically extended relief goods and conducted monitoring and documentation in Labey, Minac, Lebeng, Banao, Adonot and Sombrero. The hike to the isolated community of Labey took 17 dangerous landslides and equally dangerous roadcuts. Here, the Lutheran Church and 5 was totally washed out. Ten families have evacuated into the Baptist Church which is now at the brink of collapse. Local agriculture, particularly rice and vegetable production has been destroyed since the river grew and overflowed in the evening of October 8. Not less than 10 houses are partially damaged. 11-year old Froilan hoped to go back to school, but with their flooded and mud-filled school building, it did not seem very immediate. **The Serve the People Brigade is the first to extend relief right into the heart of the community in Labey.** A senior citizen, Manang Eleona, could not hold back her tears as she recounted the night they ran for their lives, and as the relief goods were carried into the evacuation center. Food remains the primary need in Labey, including potable water, clearing tools (shovels), cooking utensils, clothing including medicine for diarrhea, oresol and paracetamol.



In one of the roadcuts where local residents were fixing a dike and



clearing the rocks, a short program was held, with a brief input on climate change. This was attended by Mayor Mauricio Makay, while Councilor Pedro Anton, who is also a member of the Benguet Mining Alert and Action Network accompanied the Brigade during the relief missions. On the way home, the Brigade vehicles were almost hit by the rockslide in Tingondan, Itogon. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

### Mountain Province

Food supplies, clothing, blankets and clearing tools were meanwhile sent to Tadian and Betwagan Mt. Province through the provincial CPA chapter.

All the casualties at Sitio Bulala, Kayan East, Tadian have been recovered and buried as of October 14<sup>th</sup>. On October 16, the community had an assessment and planning as to relief and rehabilitation of the area. **Basic needs such as food, blankets, kitchen ware remain to be top priority for the families who lost all their belongings in the landslide.** The survivors are either living with relatives or are evacuated at the Kayan Elementary School. Community processing is also a priority, as needless to say, the experience is traumatic. Other families whose homes have been completely covered by landslides are in the following: 12 families in Betwagan, Sadanga; 2 families in Bunga, Tadian; 7 families in Lubon, Tadian, one in Kapinitan, Sabangan. There are 73 other homes which have been partially damaged. Damages to agricultural crops are at conservative government estimates of Php 1.95M. These are the crops ready for harvest but were ruined. A much higher amount should be registered if the rice seedlings and vegetable seedlings as well as crops targeted for December sales shall be computed. Infrastructure damages register at least Php 202.2 M for the main roads; Php45 M in flood control and; Php 6.97M school facilities. Other agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation canals, farm to market pathways and roads, stonewalls are yet to be calculated.

Shortage of food and other commodities such as LPG are felt in far communities. A cavan of rice has hiked up to is P2,100 in the provincial capital of Bontoc—what more in the areas that are totally isolated?

Halsema highway is still closed and the Bontoc-Ifugao road is still too dangerous to traverse although some drivers have stood up to the challenge. DPWH promises to make Halsema passable to all vehicles by October 20<sup>th</sup>. Power was restored in the main town centers of the province on October 16. This relieves the communities of darkness which adds to their fears as rains are felt in some barangays such as in Sagada.

Although the province fared better than Benguet, Pangasinan or other areas, a large number are affected. This means a large number of poor peasants and even professionals see a bleak situation in the coming months. Last season's harvests have been terrible. Rice production even in surplus areas of Natonin did not do well. Maket-an, Abungo, Laglag areas registered the most damages as 50% of their rice crops decreased. There is no second cropping for rice expected by most municipalities and there is little vegetable for the coming months. The farmers need support mechanisms in order to recover from this devastation. So far no immediate medical needs



**Some 1,000 people from all over Mountain Province trooped to Tadian to retrieve the bodies and bring relief goods.**

are identified from outside the province as the local medical personal are still adequate in serving the direct victims of the typhoon. In Betwagan, Sadanga, after a community ritual be done by elders, the villagers shall rebuild the destroyed homes through “ob-obbo” (village system of assisting each other through labor exchange).

Although we are all affected by the typhoon, it is good to note that despite difficulties encountered by all, people still gave their time, labor, donations and other support to rescue, retrieve remains of casualties, feed the volunteers and evacuees. The support came from all over the province. For instance, tourist guide organizations were among the first groups to arrive in Kayan on October 9<sup>th</sup> and continued to stay their in the next months. They went house to house in Sagada collecting food and other donations for the direct victims of the landslide. Sadly, the Philippine Army deployed in the Mt. Province was only able to respond in the Kayan Tragedy on the 4<sup>th</sup> day – October 12<sup>th</sup>.

## **Abra**

Partial reports from the PDCC dated October 9 state that Malibcong municipality incurred damages amounting to P7.1 M. Around 2,130 individuals or 423 households are affected by Pepeng. The following particular reports were gathered per district. **Needless to say, the poorest peasants are the most affected. Pepeng’s disaster affected 96 families whiel hundreds of hectares or ricefields were totally affected.**

In the Mataragan-Mabaca District, about 2 hectares of farmland was totally washed out, with an estimate of 200 bundles of rice as the usual harvest. Ricefields were also washed out in the communities of Bayabas, Calunosan, and Masil-silat; Dulao, Bulbulgon and Alimaga. Vegetable crops were estimated to have been damaged at around 50%. Twelve irrigation systems were destroyed in the areas of Bayabas, Dulao and Mataragan.

In the Bangilo-Gubang District, 57 irrigation systems were damaged—either fully or partially eroded or washed out. **These damages affected 33,500 individuals in the communities therein. Around 1,000 bundles of rice were damaged district-wide, affecting 174 families.** Carabaos, a horse, pigs and turkeys died during the typhoon, while local fishponds were flooded (Lat-ey, Umnap, Buanao). In the Malibcong-Banao District, about 200 bundles of rice were damaged in Duldulao, Taripan and Poblacion Malibcong. Washed out irrigation systems and water sources affected 97 families.

In Lacub municipality, an estimated P1 M cost of ricefields and livestock was reported for the areas of Buneg, Lan-ag and Talampac, affecting a total of 239 families. 15 irrigation systems and water sources were partially damaged while footbridges were also washed out. In Licuan Baay, the most affected families are Poblacio Licuan, which is the site of the 2008 Cordillera Day celebration; Cawayan and Dominglay. 438 families are affected in this area. In Sallapadan municipality, the 9 barangays were estimated to have incurred a P32,1 M cost of damages. Interviews with local peasants show that agricultural farmlands were washed out along the Manicbel River. Around 12,000 bundles of rice were lost, and some 65% of their vegetables were destroyed, affecting 265 families.

**Immediate relief and seed dispersal are needed in all of these areas.**

## **Apayao**

Reports from Cordillera Peoples Alliance affiliate Save Apayao People’s Organization (SAPO) claim that 14, 690 families or 68, 690 individuals in the whole province are affected by the Pepeng. 2, 809 houses were partially damaged while 312 were totally damaged. An estimated P 1,050, 650,000.00 cost of agriculture and infrastructure was recorded by the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council.

The Serve the People Brigade continues to appeal for your support for the continuing relief of the affected communities. We still need to reach out to Abra and Apayao, while monitoring and documentation needs to be sustained. For the coming weeks until December 2009, the Brigade, with the network of member organizations of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance and the Center for Development Programs in the Cordillera, will look into the

rehabilitation activities in areas of Benguet (Mankayan, Itogon, Buguias, Bakun, Bokod, Atok), Mountain Province (Tadian, Betwagan) and Apayao.

Please get in touch with us through Tel No. 063-074-304-4239, Mobile Numbers 09209286370, 09189199007 or email us at [cpa@cpaphils.org](mailto:cpa@cpaphils.org). You may also visit us at No. 55 Ferguson Road, Baguio City. Our **URGENT APPEAL** for support and other updates may be downloaded at [www.cpaphils.org](http://www.cpaphils.org) # *With reports from CORDIS-RDS, CPA, Mountain Province, KASTAN-CPA Abra, Save Apayao People's Organization and MAQUITACG*

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**Cordillera Peoples Alliance**  
**Center for Development Programs in the Cordillera**