



CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

For the Defense of the Ancestral Domain and for Self Determination

October 9, 2009

URGENT APPEAL FOR SUPPORT FOR THE VICTIMS OF TYPHOON PEPENG IN THE CORDILLERA, PHILIPPINES

BAGUIO CITY—The Cordillera Region in Northern Luzon, homeland of indigenous peoples collectively known as Igorots, is one of the areas hit most with Typhoon Pepeng, after the supertyphoon Ondoy. This mountainous region may not have been as victimized by the flood, but the very nature of the land and terrain has resulted in massive, disastrous landslides that claimed both properties and lives, especially in the mining-ravaged areas of Itogon and Mankayan in Benguet province.

As of 7 PM tonight, the region's death toll has mounted to 191, with 121 dead in Benguet, 54 in Baguio City with 5 still missing, and 23 in Mountain Province with 32 still missing. Cordillera Peoples Alliance's chapters and affiliates in Ifugao, Abra, Kalinga and Apayao are still gathering concrete data, but have generally given feedback of massive agricultural damage in the towns of Conner, Apayao and Tabuk, Kalinga. Major roads, such as Kennon, Marcos and Halsema highways have been closed, threatening Baguio City of isolation, while Conner is now totally isolated. A total of 18 landslides were documented (11 in Baguio, 6 in Benguet one in Mountain Province).

Baguio City

Landslides and floods have engulfed and drowned lives and properties in City Camp Lagoon, Pinsao, Fairview, Cresencia Village, Crystal Cave, Lucnab, QM, Kitma, Lower Cypress, Irisan, Bakakeng Central, Queen of Peace, Apugan and Kias, all in Baguio City. Over 50 houses were damaged. There is still an unaccounted number of houses and business establishments damaged in the central business district. Small rivers and creeks also overflowed, adding to the flooding of roads, which only became passable today, October 9.

As of October 9, 9 PM, 80 individuals were evacuated into the Baguio Central School, 24 families at the St. Vincent Gym, 38 families or 184 individuals at the City Camp Youth Center, (City Camp Proper), 91 families at the City Camp Youth Center (City Camp Central), 173 individuals at Aguinaldo Elementary School and around 100 families at the Daycare Center and Barangay Hall of Queen of Peace.

Benguet

Benguet, which has hosted large mines for over a century, always suffered from massive environmental disasters during the rainy season, and especially during typhoons, which causes deaths, aside from



Top photo: bodies recovered in Puguis, La Trinidad; landslide and floods in Baguio

destruction, loss of properties and livelihood. This is evident in the massive landslides in Beda, Loakan, Itogon in October 2008 due to the abandoned tunnels of Benguet Corporation, the Colalo landslide in 1999 in Mankayan due to Lepanto Consolidated's mining operations, which again happened in June 2009. The death toll now in Mankayan due to landslides has risen to 23 including a 9-months pregnant mother, an additional 5 in Acupan, Itogon. Two were reported dead in Buguias municipality due to landslides, which is adjacent to the Lepanto operations in Mankayan. UK-mining company Bezant and local subsidiary are have actually conducted exploration in Guinaoang, Mankayan. La Trinidad valley, the provincial center, registered 57 dead as of today in the communities of Beckel and Kibungan Village, Puguis. Vegetable gardens were reported washed out in Labilab, Bakun municipality.

Mountain Province

In Mountain Province, the provincial CPA chapter reported this morning at 6 AM that a massive landslide in Kayan East, Tadian municipality totally buried 23 houses, leaving 5 dead, 5 injured and 32 missing. In the retrieval, four residents were rescued, while the bodies of 5 residents were recovered. In another barangay of the same municipality, in Bunga, 5 residents were rescued from a landslide; three are still missing.

Some 130 families were reported affected in Sadanga municipality, while some 50 % agricultural damage was incurred, equivalent to 6-7 months of supposed food supply in Sadanga. Two-month old ricefields were also destroyed in Natonin, leaving the communities without surplus from this season's cropping. This situation poses serious threat to the municipalities' food security. CPA-Mountain Province has coordinated with the rescue team in Tadian and is still helping



Top: Massive slide in Itogon; men in Tublay carrying the injured and the dead; children traverse landslide in also in Tublay.

out with the retrieval until now.



There is a full range of the damages wrought by Pepeng. Many of CPA's and its network of organizations' staff, organizers and member organizations are affected. Some were already rescued from their homes in Baguio. Aside from the lives lost and properties damaged, infrastructure, agriculture and transportation is also affected. Telecommunication difficulties is one more reason why communication to provinces and interior communities is very difficult at present.

Mt. Province citizens in the retrieval operations in Tadian.

A Brief Analysis of the Situation

This situation and the series of the massive environmental disasters in the Cordillera and the rest of the country must be elevated to an understanding of the impacts of climate change and beyond the bounds of environmental issues and disaster response. It must be understood that there is disproportionate vulnerability of the majority and certain populations to the adverse impacts of climate change, of which indigenous peoples are very much included. Also, the climate crisis is best understood by acknowledging its systemic root causes and the accountability of the world capitalist system driven by the few global elite and imperialist countries and the globally dominated capitalist production and exploitation of the world's environment and resources, including the responsibility of government and top bureaucrats who passed laws that worsened climate change and environmental disasters.

These are massively responsible and accountable for the imposition of neo-liberal policies in underdeveloped countries. Imperialist and advanced capitalist countries have imposed neo-liberal policies in advancing their imperialist agenda and plunder especially in underdeveloped countries, leading to the destruction of the world's resources for their profit and greed. This greed for profit is responsible for the operation of large-scale extractive and destructive industries, such as corporate mining and large dams which is very evident in the Philippines. Our experience not only in the Cordillera but in Marinduque and Albay has proven that extractive industries, with corporate mining in particular, only leads to irreparable environmental disasters. For indigenous peoples, it is twice the blow with the violation of their collective rights to ancestral land, resources and right to self-determination.

We raise again the issue of the San Roque Dam, whose 7 floodgates were opened and flooded almost 80% of Pangasinan, especially the towns of San Manuel, San Nicolas and towards Lingayen Gulf and even Tarlac province with a 5,300 cubic meters per second flood gate which is already so close to the probable maximum flood rate of 12,800 cubic meters per second. The SRD never meant to serve anything but government's profit-making. It could never control floods, contrary to government's claim that it could, when there are already 11 tailings dams and 2 silted hydro dams upstream. During its operational lifespan of 50 years, the SRD can be expected to collect a total of 269 million cubic meters of sediment from upstream sources—the abandoned open pit mines, mineral tailings ponds, muck waste dumps, and denuded mountain slopes of the southern Benguet mining district, as well as existing reservoirs at Ambuclao and Binga. Steady silt build-up at San Roque will induce upstream flooding along the Agno river and its tributaries. Downstream, the flooding of at least 1,250 square kilometers of land will occur every time torrential rains force the opening of the dam's gates.¹ CPA and the people's opposition raised the SRD issue to Gloria Macapagal Arroyo when she assumed power but she never took it seriously as she prioritized the interest of the Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC). If only the people's opposition was heeded, the present situation may not have happened. Now, we expect more cases not merely of flooding but deaths and loss of properties. The SRPC, JBIC, the Ramos and Arroyo regimes must be held accountable for the damages and deaths and the SRD must be de-commissioned now if we want to save more lives, livelihood sources and properties.

The damages of climate change, of environmental disasters and the ruling elite's greed for profit and wealth accumulation is made the burden of the poor majority and populations highly vulnerable to its impacts.

¹ Damming our Future: Final Report of the Fact Finding Mission to Areas Affected by the San Roque Dam Project in Pangasinan, October 2000

Serve the People Brigade

The above situation necessitates urgent disaster response, such that CPA and the Center for Development Programs in the Cordillera (CDPC) organized a disaster response body composed of its network of organizations, which is the *Serve the People Brigade-Cordillera Disaster Response Network*. The name is historic, as it is derived from the disaster response initiatives of Cordillera activists during the 1972 floods and the killer quake in July 1990. This response is also rooted in the indigenous tradition of cooperation and collective action in times of disaster or in emergency situations.

The Serve the People Brigade, to sustain its rescue and relief missions, is now coordinating with other institutions, organizations and individuals in the region for rescue and relief operations in the most depressed areas in the region.

OUR APPEAL FOR SUPPORT

The Brigade humbly and urgently appeals for all forms of support for its relief and rescue operations not only for the victims of Pepeng, but in the coming emergency situations expected due to the impacts of climate change and the prevailing political situation.

For the relief operations:

- Food supplies (rice, canned goods, biscuits, munggo, sugar, salt, cooking oil, boiled eggs)
 - Drinking water, Gas for generators
 - Clothing Blankets
 - Sleeping mats New underwear
 - Toiletries (soap) Cooking pot
 - Flashlights Batteries
 - Tents
- For medicine: paracetamol, pain relievers, anti worm (mebendazole), antacid, amoxicillin, cotrimoxazole, bandages, hydrogen peroxide and betadine

For the rescue operations:

- Rubber boots Shovels
- Raincoats Food for work
- Mountaineering rope Batteries
- Flashlights Body bags
- Lime

For Financial, Material Donations and to Volunteer:

Please visit us at **No. 55 Ferguson Road, Brgy. A. Bonifacio, Baguio City** and look for **Mr. Santos Mero, Serve the People Brigade Coordinator and CPA Deputy Secretary General (09152054262)**.

You may also call or text the Hotline at mobile number **09209286370** or Telephone Number **63- 074-304-4239**, Fax number is **63-074-443-7159**. You can also reach us through email at cpa@cpaphils.org for queries.

Financial donations may also be channeled through:

Cordillera Peoples Alliance

Savings Account: 1-326-72354-8

RCBC Baguio Peso Account

You may also lend your vehicles for the relief and rescue missions, and we welcome the assistance and support of paramedics, doctors, and all volunteers who would like to be part of the relief and rescue drive.

We thank you sincerely and look forward to your positive response on this urgent appeal.

SERVE THE PEOPLE BRIGADE -CORDILLERA DISASTER RESPONSE NETWORK

Cordillera Peoples Alliance

Center for Development Programs in the Cordillera