

## **Farming Communities Affected by El Niño (Drought)**

### **Situation Report (as of 18 April 2016)**

#### **CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY**

- In June 2015, PAGASA first issued an advisory that the weak El Niño that was being experienced at that time will continue to intensify and extend until the first quarter of 2016.
- In August 2015, President Aquino directed the formation of an El Niño task force consisting of 15 government agencies.
- In December 2015 the Roadmap to Address the Impact of El Niño (RAIN) was approved. It contained measures to ensure food security, health, energy distribution, and safety (from fire) of El Niño-affected areas.
- Starting 29 March 2016, thousands of farmers and their allied groups marched along the Davao-Cotabato highway. The protesters decried the lack of response from the local government after suffering an El Niño-induced drought since October 2015.
- On 30 March, Kidapawan mayor Joseph Evangelista and Gov. Talino-Mendoza were scheduled for a dialogue with the farmers but didn't arrive. The farmers vowed to continue their roadblock until a government official talked to them.
- On 1 April 2016, upon expiration of the permit to rally, the PNP and the DSWD proceeded to disperse the group. The police eventually resorted to gunfire to break up the barricade.
- 3 farmers were killed, 116 injured, and 88 reported missing in the aftermath.
- As of 7 April, it was reported that 81 farmers were in jail and faced charges for economic sabotage, illegal assembly, and harassment and obstruction of traffic. The bail set was initially Php 12,000 each but the Kidapawan city court later reduced it to Php 6,000 each.
- On 8 April, the President issues a statement saying that he was not informed immediately about the incident. Furthermore, he reported he contracted the flu and was sick the previous week.
- On 13 April, the family of slain farmer Darwin Sulang sought refuge with church and human rights groups. They had been visited by a woman who offered them 100,000 pesos in exchange for not filing charges against the Gov. Talino-Mendoza and the police. They refused and later that night, they saw two strange men observing and loitering around their house.
- By 14 April, local actors and actresses led by celebrity Aiza Seguerra raised the amount required for the farmers to post bail (around Php 526,000).
- By 15 April, 77 farmers remained in custody even after payment was made for their release on bail. Police insisted that they must be able to provide IDs to prove their identity.
- On 17 April, all detained farmers were released. However, 2 on hospital arrest remain unaccounted for. They were last seen boarding a vehicle owned by the town mayor.

## **PREPAREDNESS & MITIGATION PLANS**

In December 2015, it was announced that the government had allocated 19 billion pesos to combat the effects of the El Niño. The aim was to mitigate the expected impacts of the prolonged El Niño, the strongest one on record in the last 65 years. Four areas were targeted for preparedness, namely: Food, Energy, Health, and Safety.

Under RAIN, fifteen government agencies are led by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA). These are the following:

- Department of Agriculture (DA)
- Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP)
- National Irrigation Administration (NIA)
- National Food Authority (NFA)
- Department of Public Works & Highways (DPWH)
- Department of Trade & Industry (DTI)
- Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)
- Department of Labor & Employment (DOLE)
- Department of Energy (DOE)
- Department of Health (DOH)
- Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP)
- Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)
- Department of Tourism (DOT)
- Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA)
- Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

The task force was directed to prepare mitigation measures particularly for food production, income diversification, energy provision, investigation of health conditions, monitoring of hazards, watershed management, water resource management, and information dissemination.

A budget of 2 billion pesos was given to DA for food production, of which 662 million alone was allocated to rice and corn production in non-vulnerable areas for future distribution in drought-affected areas. Provision of irrigation equipment was allocated 636 million and cloud seeding 116 million. Meanwhile 1.8 billion was allocated for irrigation, 361 million to install rainwater collection systems, 137 million for alternative income support via community-based employment programs, 285 million for water management for farm production, 24 million for market/price intervention, 541 million for disease prevention, and 584 million for emergency employment. These figures represent the allocated budget for the last quarter of 2015 to the first quarter of 2016.

The Kidapawan incident, however, proves that implementation of RAIN plans must have been incomplete or inadequate.

## **CURRENT SITUATION**

The SOCCSKSARGEN region has received below-normal rainfall since October 2015. This is attributed to the El Niño phenomenon, which is expected to last until June 2016. Around Php90

million-worth of agricultural crops have already been devastated in South Cotabato alone. Its neighboring province of Sarangani has reported extensive crop damage too.



Table 1. Extent of Drought-induced Crop Damage

TOWN/PROVINCE	CROP TYPE	AREA AFFECTED	FARMERS AFFECTED
North Cotabato	Rice	28,000 hectares	590 families
North Cotabato	Corn	3,690 hectares	
North Cotabato	Coconut	9,956 hectares	
North Cotabato	Rubber	10,722 hectares	
North Cotabato	Oil Palm	2,199 hectares	
North Cotabato	Cacao	153 hectares	
North Cotabato	Coffee	287 hectares	
South Cotabato	Corn	1,900 hectares	1,234 farmers
South Cotabato	Rice	1,300 hectares	1,145 farmers
Sarangani	Corn	938 hectares	2,756 families
Sarangani	Banana	768 hectares	

TOWN/PROVINCE	CROP TYPE	AREA AFFECTED	FARMERS AFFECTED
Sarangani	Rice	152 hectares	
Sarangani	Oil Palm	112 hectares	
Sultan Kudarat	Corn and Rice	1,000+ hectares	721 families
General Santos City	Corn and Rice	300 hectares	12 barangays

The farmers are severely affected largely due to failure of harvest, their main source of food and livelihood. Spending power has gone down while the prices of rice and commodities have gone up. In areas in Sarangani, rice is reportedly sold at 55 pesos per kilo. Only barangay officials and small businessmen can afford to buy.

In the Damage, Needs, & Capacities Assessment (DNCA) conducted in selected communities, damage to livelihood was noted. The following tables show the income that community members normally make if the drought had not affected them.

Table 2. Damage to livelihood in Upper Suyan, Malapatan, Sarangani

Type of Livelihood	Regular Income	% of Population Involved
Farming	Php 10,000 - 15,000 per 4 months	70-80% of men, 80% of women
Seasonal Farm Labor	Php 100 - 150 per day	20% of men, 5% of women
Small Business/Sari-sari store	Php 1,500 - 2,000 per month	0.8% of men, 0.8% of women

Table 3. Damage to livelihood in Alegria, Alabel, Sarangani

Type of Livelihood	Regular Income	% of Population Involved
Farming	Php 10,000 per 4 months	No data
Seasonal Farm Labor	Php 150 - 180 per day	No data
Charcoal and firewood making	Php 100 per day	No data
Feeds Making	Php 10 pesos per kilogram	No data
Plantation Work	Php 180 per day	No data

Table 4. Damage to livelihood in Upper Macolan, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato

Type of Livelihood	Regular Income	Number of Population Involved
Farming	Php 5,000 per 4 months	100 men
Seasonal Farm Labor	Php 120 - 150 per day	150 men, women, and children

Table 5. Damage to livelihood in Lower Macolan, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato

Type of Livelihood	Regular Income	Number of Population Involved
Farming (corn/rice)	Php 35,000 to 50,000 per 4 months	300 men, 350 women
Seasonal Farm Labor	Php 180 per day	120 men, 110 women

Table 6. Damage to livelihood in Sinapulan, Columbio, Sultan Kudarat

Type of Livelihood	Regular Income	Number of Population Involved
Farming	10 sacks of rice per 4 months 15 sacks of corn per 4 months Php 2,000 per 3 months (bananas) Php 5,000 - 7,000 per quarter (coconut)	179 men
Seasonal Farm Labor	Php 100-150 per day	75 men, 52 women

To generate cash for food, many families have opted to sell their precious livestock, from chickens to goats and carabaos. Alternative sources of income include charcoal making, firewood gathering, and making (livestock) feeds from ipil-ipil leaves. Many migrated to other towns or nearby cities to find odd jobs. Those with parcels of land have offered them for sale or lease, often at very low prices/rates.

Hunger is the biggest problem. Across three provinces, communities are living on having one meal a day. To supplement dwindling rice supplies, young banana trunk, wild yam and fruit are consumed.

Some barangays in Sarangani report that the rivers in the area have lost 70-90% of their water volume. One river currently measures at only 4 inches high, when it has a normal flow of 2 feet before the drought started. Spring water volume has decreased by at least 50%. The decrease in potable water volume for drinking and domestic needs pose health risks to the community. There are already reports of various virus and bacterial infections, particularly in children. These are added to the periodic exposure to the toxic chemicals from aerial spraying of banana plantations.

Table 7. Reported Illnesses and Diseases in Affected Communities

Province/ Location	# of Children	Reported Illnesses
Sarangani		Virus infections, Conjunctivitis, Cough, Colds, Skin Diseases
South Cotabato		Stomach Ulcers, Skin Diseases, Asthma, Urinary Tract Infection, Coughs, Colds, and Sore Throat
Sultan Kudarat	21	Cough, Colds, Asthma, Symptoms of Malnutrition

Mental health deterioration is noted in many communities, with cases of irritability and depression. A 17-year old boy suddenly attacked people with a bolo after going for days without food. Many young to middle-aged people disappear for hours just roaming the hills. Infants and small children keep crying throughout the day for lack of nourishment.

Despite these health problems, only the worst cases are taken to the hospital. Aside from the distance of the communities to hospitals, residents fear to spend money on medicines.



Meanwhile, farmers and indigenous communities in General Santos City, Sultan Kudarat, and Sarangani are at risk of massive grass fires. Horse and cow populations are losing their natural food sources in the scorched grasslands. The problem of rat infestation has also affected rice, corn, vegetable, banana and coconut farms since May and June 2015. The population of the rats has since doubled.

Military operations have further worsened the situation. In Sarangani, 75 B'laan families evacuated after aerial bombing was conducted. The same bombing severely damaged the community's water pipes and sources.

## **HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE**

### **I. From Government**

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) extended food assistance to the farmers in early March 4-5 kilos of rice for each affected family in Sarangani and General

Santos City. But this happened only once and the beneficiaries were selected. Many were not able to receive it.

In South Cotabato, there were plans to put up overhead tanks and water pumps for potable water. However, the implementation of these plans has not been confirmed. In Sultan Kudarat, the Department of Agriculture has a program to give one (1) sack of rice in exchange for 100 rat tails. In Sultan Kudarat, residents report that their barangay had released 1.3 kilos of rice each to affected families. However, no assistance had been given from the municipal and provincial government.

In February and early part of March 2016, the Department of Agriculture spent millions of pesos for cloud seeding in General Santos City, Sarangani and South Cotabato. But the resulting rainfall was inadequate. After 12 hours, the soil dried up again.

The election ban on release of calamity funds has been cited by local government units (LGUs) to justify the lack of assistance.

Meanwhile, the City of Davao approved the release of 31.5 million pesos from its calamity funds to extend as aid to the Kidapawan farmers.

## II. From Private Sector

Several celebrities have donated hundreds of sacks of rice to the farmers' organizations, among them actors Robin Padilla, Angel Locsin, Ann Curtis, Daniel Padilla, and filmmakers Jun Lana and Perci Intalan.

However, all of the communities included in the DNCA were not able to receive any other aid or relief aside from those listed in the previous section.

## REQUESTED RELIEF

The affected communities where the regional centers conducted Damage, Needs, & Capacities Assessment (DNCA) requested for food, medicines, and seeds for planting when the monsoon rains return in June. Rice, corn, vegetable, peanut, and mongo seeds are preferred. See details in the following tables.

Table 8. Relief Requested in Upper Maculan, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato

Relief	Volume	Beneficiaries
Rice	15 kilos	46 families
Dried Fish	1 kilo	46 families
Mongo Beans	1 kilo	46 families
Sugar	1 kilo	46 families
Salt	1 kilo	46 families
Corn seeds	10 kilos	25 families

Table 9. Relief Requested in Lower Maculan, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato

Relief	Volume	Beneficiaries
Rice	15 kilos	437 families
Dried Fish	1 kilo	437 families
Mongo Beans	1 kilo	437 families
Sugar	1 kilo	437 families
Salt	1 kilo	437 families
Rice seeds	10 kilos	55 families
Corn seeds	15 kilos	105 families

Table 10. Relief Requested in Alegria, Alabel, Sarangani

Relief	Volume	Beneficiaries
Rice	15 kilos	250 families
Dried Fish	1 kilo	250 families
Mongo Beans	1 kilo	250 families
Sugar	1 kilo	250 families
Salt	1 kilo	250 families
Vegetable seeds	3 packs	120 families
Corn seeds	15 kilos	120 families

Table 11. Relief Requested in Upper Suyan, Malapatan, Sarangani

Relief	Volume	Beneficiaries
Rice	15 kilos	555 families
Dried Fish	1 kilo	555 families
Mongo Beans (for consumption)	1 kilo	555 families
Sugar	1 kilo	555 families
Salt	1 kilo	555 families
Rice seeds	10 kilos	75 families
Corn seeds	15 kilos	125 families
Vegetable seeds	3 packs	120 families

Relief	Volume	Beneficiaries
Peanut and Monggo beans	2 kilos	100 families

Table 12. Relief Requested in Sinapulan, Columbio, Sultan Kudarat

Relief	Volume	Beneficiaries
Rice	15 kilos	475 families
Dried Fish	1 kilo	475 families
Mongo Beans (for consumption)	1 kilo	475 families
Sugar	1 kilo	475 families
Salt	1 kilo	475 families
Rice seeds	10 kilos	15 families
Corn seeds	15 kilos	120 families
Peanut and Monggo beans	2 kilos	75 families

Table 13. Number of target beneficiaries (food relief) in other areas

Province	Town/s	# of Families
North Cotabato	Tulunán & Makilala	590 families
Sarangani	Malapatan, Alabel & Glan	880 families
Sultan Kudarat	Columbio, Kalamansig, Lambayong, Lutayan	675 families
South Cotabato	Koronadal, Surallah, T'boli	780 families

Table 14. Summary of Relief Requested for All Areas

Relief	Volume	Beneficiaries
Rice	70,320 kilos	4,688 families
Dried Fish	4,688 kilos	4,688 families
Mongo Beans (for consumption)	4,688 kilos	4,688 families
Sugar	4,688 kilos	4,688 families
Salt	4,688 kilos	4,688 families
Rice seeds	1,450 kilos	145 families
Corn seeds	7,300 kilos	495 families

Relief	Volume	Beneficiaries
Vegetable seeds	720 packs	240 families
Peanut and Monggo beans	350 kilos	175 families



According to PAGASA, the Philippine weather agency, the El Nino is weakening and monsoon rains will be expected as usual in June. However, that is still a good one and a half months away. From today until then, the farmers who ironically plant and produce the food of the nation will remain hungry. This is the most urgent need to address. However, it must be reiterated that while the systemic problem of landlessness, political powerlessness, and corrupt government officials remain problems to solve, this situation will be vicious cycle as the effects of climate change continue to worsen year after year.

Data Sources:

1. Damage, Needs, Capacities Assessment (DNCA) from grassroots communities in SOCCSKSARGEN
2. RAIN powerpoint presentation from National Economic & Development Authority (7 April 2016)
3. <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/549326/money/economy/gov-t-allocates-p19-billion-to-combat-el-nino>
4. <http://www.manilatimes.net/el-nino-strongest-in-modern-history/209629/>
5. <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/davao/local-news/2016/04/17/2-farmers-injured-kidapawan-dispersal-disappear-468365>
6. <http://www.msn.com/en-ph/news/national/kin-of-slain-young-farmer-flee-from-kidapawan-home/ar-BBrL3ol?ocid=sf>