

As Typhoon Season Hits the Region ASEAN is repared to Respond

Super Typhoon Goni slammed the northeastern coast of the Philippines on the first day of November. The country's Goni's strength was comparable to Super Typhoon Haiyan that hit the province of Leyte almost seven years ago. Haiyan affected 16 million people and left over 7,000 people dead or missing. Goni weakened slightly after making several landfalls and still caused significant damage. The Philippine government attributes the relatively low death toll to effective early warnings, preparedness and preemptive evacuation

At government briefing on 1 November, Philippine Secretary of Defense Delfin Lorenzana, who is also Chair of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management said, "These past few days, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council started preparations for the super typhoon, coordinating with the national government's agencies, as well as local government units situated in the typhoon track to ensure that our people will be taken care of, taken out of harm's way."

Another powerful typhoon Molave had lashed the Philippines just days prior, and residents were bracing for the worst. As early as 31 October, the NDRRMC was on red alert, and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Response (AHA Centre) prepared for a potential response. Stockpiles are ready to be deployed from the Disaster Emergency Logistics System for ASEAN (DELSA) warehouse based in Manila.

Relief operations are ongoing in the hardest-hit provinces Catanduanes and Albay in the Bicol region. The Philippine government has allocated over 300 million pesos or 60 million US dollars in standby funds ____, as it continues to launch relief and recovery operations.

Typhoon Goni's path of destruction continues to the Mekong Delta region, which also had been earlier hit by Molave and three other storms, all in October—Linfa, Nangka, Saudel. Linfa caused flooding and destruction to Lao PDR, while Saudel brought flash floods to 19 provinces in Cambodia. Viet Nam has been hit by all four typhoons, with Molave the strongest it has felt in two decades.

The Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority (VNDMA) says the total damage has yet to be assessed. “From mid-September up to now, four storms and two tropical depressions occurred in a row, caused heavy rains on a large scale in the central provinces of Vietnam. High floods caused deep inundation, flash floods, and landslides occurring on a large scale. Hundreds of people are dead or missing, and about seven million are affected. Thousands of hectares of rice and crops were damaged; millions of cattle and poultry, hundreds of hectares of aquatic products were lost; many roads, bridges, and many irrigation, electricity, and telecommunications works were damaged, collapsed.”

The government of Viet Nam, with the support of development partners, the United Nations, and other international organisations organised three flash assessments teams to gauge the needs of five affected provinces. Coordination was done through the Disaster Risk Reduction Partnership, established in October 2019, that facilitates information sharing and coordination with partners in disaster risk reduction in Viet Nam.

“The Disaster Risk Reduction Partners and international agencies have taken timely and practical actions to support the people in Central Vietnam in facing the difficulties caused by natural disasters. The total amount committed for support is more 9 million US dollars, and including the immediate and prompt support from ASEAN and the Japan International Cooperation Agency as soon as the disaster occurred,” the VNDMA added.

More severe weather disturbances are expected in the region as a result of climate change and other environmental factors. It is crucial for ASEAN to build on preparedness, early warning systems, response measures, and resilience in communities that face the wrath of ferocious typhoons. The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management Response and ASEAN 2025 Vision for Disaster Management and One Asean One Responses are the most important frameworks for coordinated responses and long term disaster risk reduction in the region

Timeline (infographic)

11 October

Tropical Storm Linfa

Viet Nam sends a mission to the central provinces and calls for in-country assistance

12 October

Linfa causes 11 deaths and displaces 33,000 in Viet Nam

In Lao DPR, 1 death and almost 8,000 are displaced

14 October

Linfa and another tropical storm Nangka kill 28 people and cause flooding area of 8,539 hectares

15 October

Widespread flooding, landslides in multiple provinces of Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam

Warnings and instructions of preventive measures are spread through text messages, social media

19 October

VNDM Coordination Meeting with international organisations

21 October

Tropical storm Saudel hits Cambodia and causes flash floods

Cambodia's NCDM distributes relief assistance and conducts response operations

27 October

Typhoon Molave hits the Philippines

(add updated death toll and displaced)

28 October

Molave reaches Viet Nam

2 November

Super Typhoon wreaks havoc in the northeastern Philippines