

PHILIPPINES

Taal Volcano



KEY PRIORITIES

53,600

PEOPLE LIKELY
TO BE AFFECTED

13,400

DISPLACED

COVID-19

OUTBREAK

CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

- On 1 July, a phreatomagmatic eruption (i.e. magma coming into contact with water) was recorded from the main crater of the Taal Volcano, approximately 70km south of central Manila. This triggered an alert level 3 (on a 0–5 scale), and the eruption of the volcano appears to be imminent (OCHA 09/07/2021). In the January 2020 eruption, around 736,000 people were affected (IFRC 05/07/2021).
- On 17 July, the Taal Volcano recorded 87 volcanic earthquakes – a sharp increase from ten volcanic earthquakes on 29 June (PHIVOLCS 29/06/2021) – and a low-level background tremor that has persisted since 7 July. High levels of volcanic sulfur dioxide emissions and steam-rich plumes were generated from the main crater (PHIVOLCS 18/07/2021).
- At alert level 3, magma extruded from the main crater could drive an explosive eruption. The Taal Volcano island is currently considered a danger zone. Accessing the island and the Agoncillo and Laurel municipalities is hazardous because there is a risk of a volcanic tsunami if strong eruptions occur (PHIVOLCS 18/07/2021).
- As at 17 July, more than 18,600 people were affected and around 13,400 people were displaced in Batangas province because of the eruption. Agoncillo and Laurel municipalities have the highest number of displaced people so far (2,800 and 4,400 respectively) (DROMIC 19/07/2021). Overall, nearly 53,600 people are likely to be affected by the eruption of the Taal Volcano (AHA Centre 01/07/2021).

ANTICIPATED SCOPE AND SCALE

- Forecasting the impact of a volcanic eruption is difficult (BBC 13/01/2020). As at 17 July, the alert was at level 3, with a 7km radius danger zone. If the alert is raised to level 4, the danger zone radius will be extended to 14km (OCHA 09/07/2021), and the number of people who live in the danger zone affected by the volcano eruption will increase to 459,300 (OCHA 13/01/2020).
- Houses within the danger zone are likely to sustain damage depending on their closeness to the volcano (IFRC 05/07/2021). Evacuees will often not be able to return to their homes even once the volcanic activities subside.

LESSONS LEARNT

- Lack of communication between different government agencies on the national and subnational level operating on the ground in previous disasters often resulted in delayed response, overlapping of efforts, and inconsistent recovery policies (World Bank 02/12/2020). To ensure an adequate response, those agencies need to focus on improved communication.
- Despite the high activity of the Taal Volcano, people living in the area are not educated on how to deal with eruptions (Manila Bulletin 17/01/2020) and are probably not sufficiently prepared to react to one.

HUMANITARIAN CONSTRAINTS

- Ash reduces visibility and makes roads slippery, increasing the risk of accidents (Garda World 01/07/2021). This is likely to hinder humanitarian operations.
- Ash fall caused power cuts when the volcano last erupted in January 2020 (Manila Bulletin 15/01/2020). A lack of electricity would cut off communication with people in the affected area and prevent them from accessing information.

NATIONAL RESPONSE CAPACITY

- Red Cross
- Lipa Archdiocesan Social Action Commission, Inc.
- National Secretariat for Social Action
- Department of Social Welfare and Development

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE CAPACITY

- WFP
- IOM
- UNICEF

SECTORAL NEEDS

Health

The efficacy of the Philippines' health system suffers from imbalanced distribution of health centres and staff. In Batangas, there are 2.8 doctors for 100,000 people, compared to the national average of 3.9 (WHO 01/03/2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has further strained the country's health resources (HCT Philippines 11/05/2020), leading to a shortage of health workers and medical supplies (Time 28/06/2021). This makes it more difficult for people with pre-existing health conditions, pregnant women, and children, who are most vulnerable to exposure to volcanic smog, from receiving the medical attention they need (IFRC 05/07/2021).

Shelter and NFI

Nearly 3,670 people displaced by the volcano so far are located in 26 evacuation centres, while 9,770 people are staying with family or friends (DROMIC 19/07/2021). Evacuees are likely to be in need of essential household items, including blankets, sleeping mats, and mosquito nets (IFRC 14/01/2020) as well as personal protective equipment. If the radius of the danger zone is extended, more emergency shelters need to be readied.

Protection

Following disasters, protection concerns increase, particularly regarding separated and unaccompanied children and women. These two groups are at risk of exploitation, psychosocial trauma, and gender-based violence. Displaced people living with relatives and friends are likely to have limited access to private sleeping spaces and latrines that are safe for women and children. Children in shelters need safe, child-friendly spaces (IFRC 14/01/2021).

AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Typhoon season

The typhoon season in the Philippines typically lasts from July–November. On average, the country is hit by 20 typhoons every year (ADRC accessed 14/07/2021), and Batangas is exposed to 16% of them (FAO accessed 13/07/2021). Heavy rainfall and the strong winds that accompany typhoons are likely to affect people already displaced by the volcano.

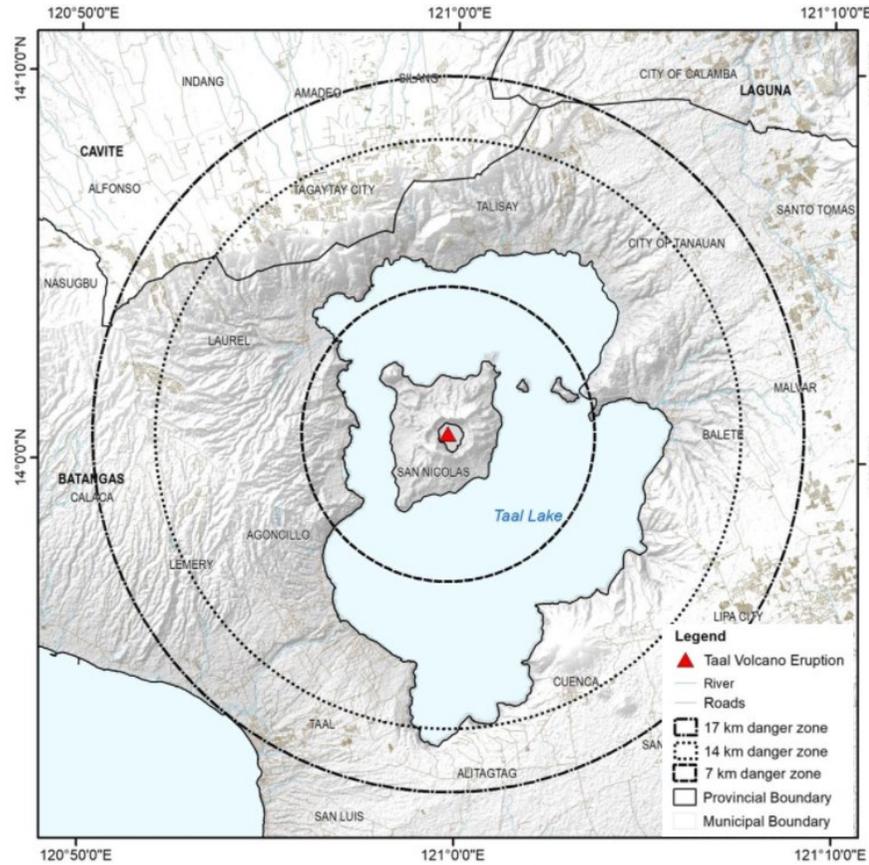
COVID-19 outbreak

The Philippines have been struggling to respond to the second wave of COVID-19 infections that peaked in mid-April 2021 (Reuters 20/04/2021). Even though the number of reported cases has declined, from 72,848 per week in mid-April to 36,706 in the first week of July (WHO accessed 13/07/2021), the number of infections is still high. In Batangas province, the number of recorded cases in a week per 100,000 people is 38.19 (Rappler 08/04/2021), compared to 33 on the national level (Reuters accessed 13/07/2021). Overcrowded shelters increase the likelihood of COVID-19 outbreak or spread (ABC 02/07/2021), especially with the existing shortage of personal protective equipment (CNN 20/06/2021). A vaccination campaign for evacuees is underway (Rappler 05/07/2021).

Livelihoods

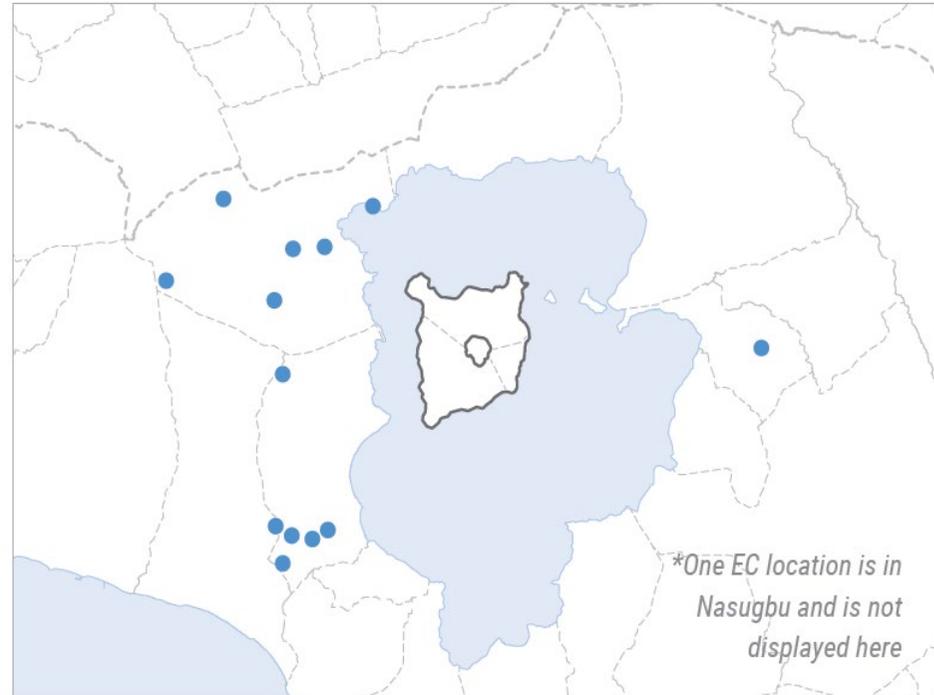
In early 2020, the eruption of the Taal Volcano severely disrupted agricultural activities in the area (World Bank 02/12/2020). Batangas is mainly an agricultural province (Batangas accessed 13/07/2021). Acidic ash that is likely to cover the danger zone in case of an eruption damages vegetation and causes crop failure (IVHHN accessed 13/07/2021). As at 9 July, most fishing activities were prohibited except for emergency harvest (to avoid the death of fish caused by overpopulation in fish cages) or feeding (The Tribune 09/07/2021). This will cause loss of income and disrupt the livelihoods of families that depend on fishing and agriculture in the area.

ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THE ERUPTION OF THE TAAL VOLCANO



Source: Manila Observatory (12/01/2020)

Evacuation centre locations*



Source: OCHA (09/07/2021)