A man carries a boy on his shoulder April 10, 2022, as they walk on a flooded road after Tropi

A man carries a boy on his shoulder April 10, 2022, as they walk on a flooded road after Tropical Storm Megi hit Capiz, Philippines. (CNS/Reuters/Philippine Coast Guard Handout)



by Catholic News Service

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Manila, Philippines — April 14, 2022
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Tropical Storm Megi continues to inflict damage in the Visayas and Mindanao regions of the Philippines after making landfall April 10.

By April 14, the death toll surpassed 120, with dozens remaining missing. Landslides and street flooding forced 140,000 people to seek refuge at evacuation sites in Northern Mindanao and Eastern Samar provinces, reported ucanews.com.

On April 13, the Vatican sent a telegram expressing Pope Francis' condolences as well his prayers for the dead, injured, displaced and emergency personnel involved in recovery efforts.

The Philippine army has joined the rescue efforts but is facing difficulties in the movement of its personnel, reported ucanews.com.

"We are racing against time to rescue those who are hit by landslides but cannot advance in some areas because the ground is still moving ... it is dangerous," Col. Noel Vestuir told the media April 12.

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"Our rescue teams are having difficulty in locating missing persons due to the mud deposits in flooded areas. We need to act fast, as many could die due to suffocation," Gary Escaler, a member of a rescue team, told ucanews.com.

Widespread power interruptions also hampered monitoring efforts and relief operations in the affected areas. Sources said it would take a month or two before electricity would be restored in affected regions.

Escaler said they had pulled out more than 20 people trapped inside their homes after a mudslide in Samar province.

"Had we arrived a few hours later, many of them could have died of suffocation because their houses were covered with mud," he added.

In Leyte province, several residents managed to escape or were pulled out of the mud alive, but many were still feared trapped.

Authorities announced they would shift their approach from rescue to retrieval in order to help the affected people recover their belongings.

A member of the Philippine Coast Guard carries a young girl April 10, 2022, as they walk on a

A member of the Philippine Coast Guard carries a young girl April 10, 2022, as they walk on a flooded road after Tropical Storm Megi hit Leyte Island. (CNS/Reuters/Philippine Coast Guard Handout)

National and local disaster agencies said storm winds had destroyed large tracts of rice plantations in the region.

"Our farmers are supposed to harvest rice this summer season, sometime in May, but because of the typhoon, all their money and efforts were turned to ashes. This is really sad for them," Marilyn De Guia of the agriculture department told ucanews.com.

De Guia, quoting a report of the Department of Agriculture, said the department estimated a total loss of $30.6 million because of the storm.

Meanwhile, Caritas, the Catholic Church's social arm, allocated cash aid of about $6,000 for the Archdiocese of Capiz and the Diocese of Maasin in the Visayas region to help victims of the tropical storm.

"We appeal for donations for our brothers and sisters who are victims ... Many of them are children whose houses and clothes were destroyed by the floods. May the spirit of the Holy Week propel us to love the needy by assisting them," Maasin Diocese said in an appeal issued on Facebook.