

Intro: *Two weeks after a second typhoon hit the Philippines on October 3, several provinces in the northern island of Luzon are still reeling from the floods triggered by weeks of continuous rains. In Pangasinan and Tarlac provinces, several villages and cities were devastated after the authorities were forced to release water from local dams, which were in danger of spilling over. Médecins Sans Frontières has been providing medical assistance and relief items to the most affected communities in Luzon.*

Patient portraits:

Christina Belisario, mother of four, Carmen West, Rosales, Pangasinan Province

"My house has been totally flooded. By the time the water from the dam arrived at our village it was night here and we were not prepared at all. It came as a total surprise at around eleven or midnight and the water rapidly rose to chest level. We had had no warning. It was dark, windy and raining outside and I was very scared. We didn't have time to take any food or belongings.

"We grabbed our four children went wading through the water towards the evacuation centre. The current was strong and we lost our clothes, radio, furniture - everything.

"We've been staying at the evacuation centre since October 9. We receive a little food from the government, two cans of sardines, three bags of noodles and one kg of rice twice a week. But it's not enough and we have to divide it among us. We still can't go back to our house, the water is still up to waist level and all our paddy fields are under water.

"I don't know what we will do because the floods happened just before we could harvest and we have lost our income. We don't know when the water will recede enough for us to go back and start cleaning. It could take months.

"I came to the mobile clinic because we are drinking from the deep well and we don't have any supply of water so the whole family has had bad stomach pains. The children have been coughing and have diarrhoea."

Norwina A. Quibueyn, mother of three Santa Lucia, Moncada South District, Tarlac Province

"The water rose to chest level and flooded our house. The floods started at night and we didn't know when the water would stop and how high it would go. I have three children and wasn't sure of what I should do, so we ran to my sister's house which is on higher ground. I didn't want to go to the evacuation centre. It's hard to keep an eye on the children there. The water has started going down now, but I'm not sure when we'll be able to clean up and fix our house."

Jo Deang, 33 years old Distribution, Carmen East, Rosales, Pangasinan Province

"What happened here makes me very nervous.

"The water came from the dam and rose nearly ten feet in places. I had never seen anything like this before.

"People here were not prepared. Many were washed away; some of those staying in lower houses were wounded by debris. The warnings came too late. Only three hours before the water came, there were some announcements through a loudspeaker on the top of a house but it was too late. Some people ran to higher ground or looked for two storey buildings, which got very crowded. Thank god no one was hurt in my family.

Solidad Barcabel, 59 years old, Carmen East, Rosales, Pangasinan Province

"My house was totally flooded and my sister and brother's houses just next door were totally destroyed. They were built of bamboo and there's nothing left. Now they are staying in the rubble trying to clear the area, but it's full of mud and dirty.

"I don't know how we can start all over again. I've lost all my belongings. It was so violent! Now my family and I sleep in a temporary shelter with the five grandchildren, but we can only stay for a few weeks there. We were given sardines and noodles by the government."

"There are around 300 people in Zone One where we are and twenty-seven houses were totally destroyed. I have only the clothes I'm wearing left. We have no money. How can we rebuild our lives? We need help. It makes me feel so sad what happened here; people didn't deserve this."

Bonifacio Tabigne, father of three, 62 years-old, Carmen East, Rosales, Pangasinan Province

"I have no house any more. This pile of rubble you see behind me, it's all that's left. The water came all at once. I was washed two hundred meters away by the current. I swam the best I could but it was really terrifying, because of all the debris."

"I'm lucky because I nearly drowned. I had swallowed a lot of water and mud so I was really sick and kept vomiting. It was such chaos after the flood that it took me two days to find my family. I couldn't come back earlier because the water was still very high. So I had to stay all that time without any food or water."

"They were really shocked because they thought I had died. My sisters' houses have also been destroyed. My grocery shop was ruined and I lost everything: food, stocks, furniture, house, clothes, everything is gone."

Mr Ruperto, 63 years-old, Carmen East, Rosales, Pangasinan Province

"When the water came, my wife and I were so panicked that if my son hadn't come to our rescue, we probably would have drowned because the current was very strong. My wife can't walk and had to be carried by a neighbour.

"There's nothing left of my house now, just this pile of rubble and bamboo and I'm wearing the clothes I was wearing at the time. The water came around 7 o'clock and continued for at least 24 hours. We ran and couldn't take anything."

"There was no warning and all around people were running and panicking seeking higher ground. The neighbours got hurt by debris. The water was brown and muddy. It came up to seven to ten feet high and it was very slippery."

"Our son took us to his two-storey house. I lost all the furniture, my radio and the water washed away all my pigs, my two dogs and my goats. Where we are, the water only started to recede a few days ago. I haven't been able to rebuild, I have no materials and no tools left. We really need help. We are very scared it could happen again though. There are many rumours that the dam is damaged."