

Magnitude 6.0 earthquake hits Basco, Batanes

Published April 11, 2020 1:14am

Updated April 11, 2020 4:50am



A magnitude 6.0 earthquake hits Basco, Batanes early Saturday morning, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) said.

The quake hit at 12:44 a.m. is tectonic in origin and has a depth of 157 kilometers northeast of Basco, Batanes.

Intensity IV is felt in Basco and Itbayat in Batanes.

Damage is not expected after the quake, Phivolcs reported. But resident may experience aftershocks. -- **BAP, GMA News**

Source: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/regions/733543/magnitude-6-2-earthquake-hits-basco-batanes/story/>

Earthquakes rock Batanes, Davao Occidental on Black Saturday

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Apr 11, 2020 1:38:42 AM

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines, April 11) — A magnitude 6.0 earthquake rocked Batanes on Black Saturday, followed two hours later by a 5.5 magnitude quake off Davao Occidental, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology or Phivolcs reported. There were no immediate reports of damage.

The earthquake in Batanes struck at 12:44 a.m. some 37 kilometers northeast of the provincial capital, Basco, according to Phivolcs' updated report. It had a depth of 157 kilometers.

Phivolcs amended its initial report that put the magnitude at 6.2 and the epicenter at about 16 kilometers northeast of Basco.

The shaking was felt at Intensity IV in Basco, and Itbayat. Intensity III was recorded in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan, and Luna, Apayao. Meanwhile, Intensity II tremors hit Laoag City and Pasuquin, Ilocos Norte, and Intensity I in Vigan City.

In July last year, a deadly 5.4 earthquake also rocked Batanes, killing eight people and injuring 63 others.

Meanwhile, the magnitude 5.5 quake struck at sea 141 kilometers southeast of Jose Abad Santos, Davao Occidental at 2:45 a.m. It had a depth of 52 kilometers.

Intensity II shaking was felt in Kiamba, Alabel, and Malungon, Sarangani, while Intensity I was recorded in General Santos City, and Tupi, South Cotabato; Gingoog City, Misamis Oriental.

Phivolcs warned of possible aftershocks, but said no damage was expected for the two earthquakes. Both were tectonic in origin.

#ChangeTheEnding: No global health crisis can stop the Earth Hour Celebration

By [CNN Philippines Staff](#)

Published Apr 10, 2020 4:45:52 PM



Metro Manila (CNN Philippines) — People all around the globe, including the Philippines, celebrated the Earth Hour through digital activities this year amid the coronavirus crisis.

On March 28, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), held different activities through digital platforms to celebrate the annual Earth Hour.

WWF-Philippines national ambassadors Marc Nelson and Rovilson Fernandez hosted the “Conservation Conversations,” to allow Filipinos from all across the country to participate.

Meanwhile, musicians Johnoy Danao, Ebe Dancel, and Bullet Dumas performed for a digital concert thrown by Gabay Kalikasan as part of their own Earth Hour celebration.

“In the midst of this crisis we are all reminded that we are connected and we can only address this if we act as one. Earth Hour calls for our united and sustained response to care for our environment. We need to realize what is important,” WWF-Philippines Executive Director Joel Palma said.

Through digital events, digital participation was observed in 190 countries and territories, and #EarthHour2020 and its related hashtags made 3.1 billion impressions globally. Earth Hour 2020 also trended on Twitter and Google Search in 37 countries.

“We are deeply saddened by the loss of lives from the COVID-19 outbreak and our thoughts are with the families who have lost loved ones or who are sick. In this hour of crisis, we need to unite now more than ever to safeguard our future and the future of our planet. It is a time for solidarity and a time to respond to challenges more creatively and work more collaboratively, which is why Earth Hour is being marked through digital events across the globe,” said WWF International Director General Marco Lambertini.

With the launch of their new campaign, WWF-Philippines asked everyone to help #ChangeTheEnding on the current environmental crisis.

Earth Hour Philippines 2020 served as a rallying point for the next five years of conservation work for the organization, as it seeks to instill a sense of urgency in the public for the most pressing environmental issues while urging governments, businesses, and individuals alike to contribute in solving them.

SPONSORED BY:



Source: <https://cnnphilippines.com/lifestyle/2020/4/10/changetheending-earth-hour-celebration.html?fbclid#.XpA8tbWI8Tw.twitter>

El Nido Resorts gets WFEN certification

M By [The Manila Times](#)
OPINION

April 11, 2020



El Nido Miniloc Island Resort

TEN Knots Group, a Palawan-based upscale resort chain, was recently awarded by the prestigious Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network (WFEN) the world's first-ever Sea Turtle Friendly Tourism Certification for its exceptional care for the aquatic animal.

Working with WFEN since 2017 to develop and implement best practice guidelines for resorts and tourism stakeholders to contribute to conservation, the group has demonstrated their commitment to sustainability and protection of biodiversity including critical mangrove, seagrass, and coral reef ecosystems.

A subsidiary of Ayala Land Inc., the group is composed of four luxury El Nido Resorts — Apulit Island, Miniloc Island, Lagen Island, and Pangulasian Island, and Lio Tourism Estate, a 325-hectare master-planned mixed-use sustainable resort community in mainland El Nido with low-density boutique hotels, commercial establishments, residences, restaurants and lifestyle shops.

The properties have met the requirements for mitigating key threats to sea turtles and their survival through their Be Green (Guard, Respect, Educate El Nido) program, which includes best practices to minimize negative impacts. Conservation practices include ensuring beachfront lighting that does not cause disorientation of hatchlings, and conduct of sea turtle patrols to help protect nests, hatchlings, and adult turtles from poachers and other threats.

Be Green started out as an environmental education program in 1999 for its staff, and eventually expanded to include nature interpretation trainings, community outreach, youth camps, and other projects undertaken by Ten Knots' Environment and Sustainability Department.

“This certification comes at an opportune time as Ten Knots Group celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, and validates our efforts, showing us we are on the right track when it comes to preserving the environment.” says Marketing Director Joey Bernardino.

The resorts highlight guest education to ensure safety of sea turtles, and have also eliminated disposable plastic products to help address marine plastic pollution. They also undertake periodical coastal and underwater cleanup efforts to ensure the health of the marine ecosystem.

“We are proud to add Ten Knots as part of the global Wildlife Friendly family of brands. They are a model we hope other resorts around the world will be inspired by to protect our fragile marine resources through tourism that advances conservation outcomes for species like sea turtles,” says WFEN Executive Director and co-founder Julie Stein.

Located in northern Palawan, El Nido town is habitat to over 850 fish species, 45 genera of corals, over a hundred bird species, and five out of the country’s seven marine turtle species. Its beaches are important nesting habitat for three including the endangered Green, the critically endangered Hawksbill and the vulnerable Olive Ridley sea turtle.

Other rare and protected species within the El Nido Resorts include the Palawan Hornbill, the Asian Fairy-Bluebird, and the Philippine Pangolin.

Economic decline, environmental wonders: The lessons of coronavirus



By [Ludwig O. Federigan](#)

April 11, 2020

Last of two parts

Even at the most uncertain time brought by the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic, there is some positive event that one can be hopeful about. With the world coming into a near-halt, with frozen economic activity, we have seen a histrionic drop in emissions and air pollution.

The sharp decline is a positive development for the planet and humans who live on it.

In China, where Covid-19 originated and is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide emissions fell by a quarter or 25 percent during the first month of its lockdown primarily due to the decline in coal consumption and industrial activities, according to a study made by Lauri Myllyvirta, an analyst at the Finland-based non-profit Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, titled "Analysis: Coronavirus temporarily reduced China's CO2 (carbon dioxide emissions by a quarter" published in Carbon Brief. The reduction has offered unexpected relief given China's huge problems with air pollution which caused an estimated 1 million premature deaths a year.

In Italy, the epicenter of Covid-19 in Europe whose number of reported cases and deaths have surpassed that of China, the decrease of economic activity due to its lockdown showed how the sharp decline of nitrogen dioxide emissions, a greenhouse gas that is a byproduct of burning fossil fuels, across Europe clearly demonstrated the positive impact on the environment.

Nitrogen dioxide emissions, a major air pollutant, are linked to factory output and vehicles operating on the road. As both industry and transport come to a standstill during this pandemic, nitrogen dioxide emissions can be a good indicator of global economic activity. Unlike the Covid-19 pandemic, air pollution contributes to millions of deaths across the globe every year, aggravating cardiovascular disease and respiratory health.

Here, in the Philippines, the photos unleashed by journalist Raffy Tima in his twitter account one week after the declaration of an enhanced community quarantine showed bluer skies over the National Capital Region. In his subsequent tweets, he shared photos showing Timberland Heights in San Mateo, Rizal province, the Sierra Madre Mountains in Bulacan area and the 1,821-foot Memorial Cross of the Mt. Samat Shrine in Bataan seen from the GMA Network Building in Quezon City. Never before these views with clearer skies can be seen if not for the self-isolation of over 10 million inhabitants in the metropolis.

Another report cited three groups — the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Institute of Environmental Science and Meteorology (IESM) at the University of the Philippines Diliman, and Airtoday.ph — released data showing how air pollution decreased in the capital region.

Just like in China, Italy and elsewhere, majority of the air pollution comes from vehicle emissions. The World Health Organization reported that, using 2010 data, transport accounted for about 23 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions. Multiple studies have shown the substantial impacts of gasoline and diesel-fueled vehicles not only on air quality and human health but also to climate change.

The study titled “Global Climate and Human Health Effects of the Gasoline and Diesel Vehicle Fleets” published by the American Geophysical Union in February 2020 captured the same conclusion. You can access the full study through this link: <https://doi.org/10.1029/2019GH000240>.

Will we be able to sustain this decline of emissions and decreased air pollution?

In the short term, these environmental changes are seemingly miraculous. However, we have to learn the lessons of history. One of the many lessons in the past economic recessions — the last being the 2008 global financial crisis — was the dramatic decline of greenhouse gas emissions, but only to shoot back up in the recovery process — and, in some cases, may come back with a vengeance. Without any structural changes, the decline of emissions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic could be short-lived and would have little impact on the carbon dioxide that have accumulated in the atmosphere over the decades.

One of my professors in the University of East Anglia where I took my climate change and development course — distinguished French-Canadian scientist Marie Corinne Lyne Le Quéré — said that this drop is not due to structural changes so as soon as confinement ends, she expects the emissions will go back close to where they were.

Climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe, in her tweet a week ago, said that, as the pandemic passes, carbon emissions will most likely bounce right back up again as industries make up for their lost productivity and revenue. Hayhoe added that “any slowdown is temporary at best.”

These environmental wonders are not the silver lining amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is no doubt that the biggest impact of the pandemic is on the economy —affecting economic output, revenue, consumption and emissions. No one has ever thought that this faceless enemy will drag the global economy to almost zero growth. The last time the world was in this situation was during World War 2.

Over the long term, without increasing global emissions, we have to incorporate transformative and sustainable measures to usher the world to a new economic order. This can be done when businesses start to pour more and new investments into environmental, ethical and socially-responsible projects like generating electricity from renewables, not fossil fuels; and transitioning to affordable and carbon neutral transport systems.

The author is the executive director of the Young Environmental Forum. He completed his climate change and development course at the University of East Anglia (United Kingdom) and executive program on sustainability leadership at Yale University (USA). He can be emailed at ludwig.federigan@gmail.com.

Crossroads, Covid-19 and climate change

By [JOHN LEO C. ALGO](#)

April 11, 2020

The coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic has become a defining period in our lifetime. It is alarming how something unseen by the naked eye can almost bring our world to a standstill. Just imagine if a threat of this magnitude becomes not a once-in-a-generation event, but a regular occurrence.

Yes, this is a possibility due to another microscopic agent: greenhouse gases, of which there are too much in our atmosphere and oceans, and cause climate change.

No, there is no current proof of a direct link between man-made climate change and Covid-19. Yet that does not mean that parallels on impacts and responses cannot be drawn between these two threats to global security and sustainability.

Similar impacts

Firstly, the impacts of both Covid-19 and climate change can be life-threatening to everyone. No matter your wealth, race, religion or location, anyone can be affected by either threat if we would not exercise caution and prevention. Secondly, some sectors are more vulnerable to both threats. As Pope Francis stated in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, “the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest.”

For instance, the enhanced community quarantine in Luzon has forced many businesses to close down for a month. While some have the capacity for their employees to work from home and provide for their families, low-income jobs do not have this flexibility and guarantees for financial security. Some of them also live in crowded homes and neighborhoods, where social distancing is nearly impossible. All of these conditions leave them more prone to Covid-19.

Now, replace Covid-19 with a climate change impact such as longer droughts, severe air pollution or even another viral disease and similar scenarios would play out, if not already a reality in many parts of the world.

Additionally, climate change impacts can worsen the effects of diseases. Higher temperatures cause the depletion of resources and destruction of ecosystems. A lack of stable supply of food and water or cleaner surroundings would result in even higher vulnerabilities for human communities and our biodiversity.

While the current pandemic may not be linked to climate change, future incidences might be. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change projects that “climate change will further expand the geographic range” of diseases such as malaria and dengue. At higher degrees of warming, the world will experience greater negative health impacts from zoonotic diseases, which includes Covid-19.

Time and time again, we get hit by these hazards and, for many of them, our public and private institutions are not ready to effectively deal with them.

So why does the world rapidly respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, yet has not decisively addressed the climate emergency even after 25 years of negotiations? Because people respond more to something that is directly and immediately more life-endangering, especially the rich. This is a perception that needs to change.

Different response

There are many lessons that we must learn from how we address the Covid-19 pandemic that would help us deal with the climate emergency.

First is the importance of individual cooperation to prevent the hazard from becoming worse. Rodne Galicha of Living Laudato Si Philippines said “while we must exercise caution, let us not let fear and panic overtake our judgment during this time. Instead, let ourselves become living embodiments of mindfulness, generosity and compassion for others.”

Second is how our public and private institutions respond to curbing Covid-19. We need national and local leaders who have the vision and will to implement an urgent, comprehensive and coordinated approach to deliver aid and services to improve their well-being of their constituencies. Corporations must provide support to their workers to allow them to justly transition through any crisis.

Again, these principles can be applied to addressing climate change. However, unlike the Covid-19 pandemic, preventing climate change from becoming completely irreversible would not take months or a few years to accomplish, but rather decades. This crisis is something that cannot be solved by imposing self-quarantines or merely preparing for the worst. Every year that we delay decisive mitigation and adaptation is costly for our planet.

The most important takeaway from the Covid-19 pandemic that can be applied to the climate crisis is this: we need our governments and businesses to invest in stable, inclusive, resilient and sustainable systems and communities that allow for economic and social development without compromising environmental health.

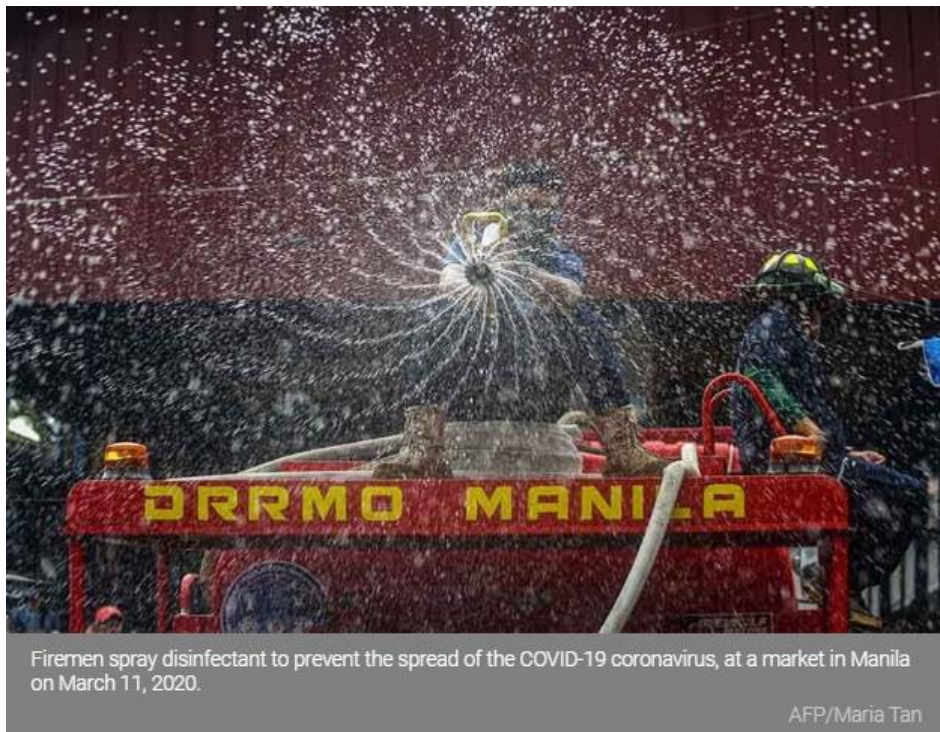
Instead of funding or profiting from environmentally-destructive practices from coal-fired power plants to illegal wildlife trades, why not invest in universal health care, environmental education, clean water, small-scale organic farming, renewable energy development and other indicators of sustainability? Why not prevent instead of merely reacting?

We have reached crossroads for addressing global crises. If we are already struggling to address a pandemic, how would we fare in dealing with a likely more unpredictable and catastrophic climate?

DOH: Spraying, misting of disinfectants not
recommended to combat spread of COVID-19

PAGE 1/ 1/2

April 11, 2020
DATE



DOH: Spraying, misting of disinfectants not recommended to combat spread of COVID-19

[Gaea Katreena Cabico](#) (Philstar.com) - April 10, 2020 - 5:17pm

MANILA, Philippines — The Department of Health announced on Friday that it does not recommend spraying of surfaces or misting of areas with disinfecting agents to kill the new coronavirus.

The announcement from the health authorities came late as local governments and private companies have been conducting regular misting to help prevent the spread of the new virus. Disinfection booths have been also set up across the archipelago.

“The DOH does not recommend spraying or misting. There is no evidence to support that spraying of surfaces or large-scale misting of areas, indoor or outdoor with disinfecting agents, kills the virus,” the department said.

Spraying or misting may even cause harm as it can cause pathogens to be dispersed further, cause skin irritation or inhalation of chemicals and subsequent development of respiratory side effects and may lead to environmental pollution, DOH added.

Instead of spraying or misting disinfectants, the public is urged to soak objects completely or disinfect surfaces directly to kill the virus.

In a separate post, the World Health Organization Representative Office for the Philippines also said that spraying of surfaces or large-scale misting using alcohol, chlorine or other chemicals does not kill the virus.

It stressed that practicing physical distancing, regular handwashing and avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth are more effective ways to reduce the chances of being infected.

DOH: Spraying, misting of disinfectants not recommended to combat spread of COVID-19

PAGE 1 / 2/2

April 11, 2020 DATE

World Health Organization Philippines @WHOPhilippines · Apr 9, 2020

Replying to @WHOPhilippines

#AlaminAngTotoo: Hindi kumakalat ang #COVID19PH sa pamamagitan ng 5G mobile network

Hindi nadadala ng mga radio wave/mobile network ang mga virus. Kumalat na ang COVID-19 kahit sa mga bansang walang 5G mobile network.

Hindi kumakalat ang COVID-19 sa pamamagitan ng 5G mobile network

Hindi nadadala ng mga radio wave/mobile network ang mga virus. Kumalat na ang COVID-19 kahit sa mga bansang walang 5G mobile network.

Ang COVID-19 ay kumakalat sa pamamagitan ng mga droplet kung ang taong may impeksyon ay uubo, babahing o magsasalita. Maaari ring mahawaan ang tao sa paghawak ng mga kontaminadong bagay pagkatapos ay hahawak sa kaniyang mata, bibig o ilong.

World Health Organization Representative Office for the Philippines #COVID19PH #coronavirus

World Health Organization Philippines @WHOPhilippines

#AlaminAngTotoo: Ang pag-spray o pag-mist ng alkohol, chlorine o iba pang kemikal na pang-disinfect sa buong katawan, gaya ng mga nasa disinfection booth, ay hindi nakapapatay ng mga coronavirus na nakapasok na sa loob ng iyong katawan.#COVID19PH

Napatay ba ang bagong coronavirus sa pag-spray o pag-mist ng alkohol, chlorine o ibang kemikal sa buong katawan?

Ang pag-spray o pag-mist ng alkohol, chlorine o iba pang kemikal na pang-disinfect sa buong katawan, gaya ng mga nasa disinfection booth, ay hindi nakapapatay ng mga virus na nakapasok na sa loob ng iyong katawan. Maaari pang makasama ang pag-spray o pag-mist ng mga naturang kemikal sa damit at mga mucous membrane (sa mata, bibig at respiratory system). Maaaring gamitin ang alkohol, chlorine at iba pang kemikal sa pag-disinfect ng mga bagay, ngunit gamitin ang mga ito ayon sa naaangkop na rekomendasyon. Mas mabisa pa ring panlaban sa virus ang physical distancing, madalas na paghugas ng mga kamay, at pag-iwas na hawakan ang mata, ilong at bibig.

World Health Organization Representative Office for the Philippines #COVID19PH #coronavirus

24 10:54 AM - Apr 10, 2020

The Philippines has so far reported 4,195 COVID-19 cases—221 of whom have died.

As of Friday, global death total from the novel coronavirus pandemic reached 93,706, according to a tally from AFP.

More than 1,567,590 declared cases have been registered in 192 countries and territories since the epidemic first emerged in China in December. Of these cases, at least 316,800 are now considered recovered. — with AFP

IP communities eyed as food sites



Published 8 hours ago
on April 10, 2020 09:21 PM
By **PNA**



The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) on Friday said it is pushing for the development of IP communities as food production sites amid the enhanced community quarantine against the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

NCIP Commissioner Allen Capuyan, in a statement, said they are discussing this with the Department of Agriculture (DA) to ensure “food self-sufficiency per community”.

“There is an urgent need for massive food production in every IP community areas to offset the limited movement of goods to other provinces and vice versa plus creating food self-sufficiency per community,” he said.

Capuyan added that the discussion with Agriculture Secretary William Dar will soon materialize as the commission is now drafting a memorandum circular for the measure.

“It’s time that customary laws and practices of resilience be enhanced for Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICC) for survivability during (the) pandemic,” Capuyan said.

The act, he added, aims to lessen the public’s burden amid the lockdown and at the same time empower IP communities in times of crisis.

“Currently, local chief executives are still bringing up to the mountain areas the food requirements when it can actually be produced on the site,” he said.

The NCIP’s Office on Socio-economic and Special Concerns (OSESSC) will supervise, monitor and consolidate all reports and compliances.

Early this year, the DA in Davao Region urged an IP community in an upland area of Compostela town in Davao de Oro to consider agricultural ventures with investors to maximize the potential income from their ancestral land.

DA 11 director Ricardo Onate Jr. reached out to Matigsalog IP officials Datu Sirano Mambay-an, and Benito Baylonsanon of Kauswagan Side 4 Farmers Association to discuss possible crops for development and the benefits of partnering with agribusiness corporations, citing additional income from profit-sharing, lease payments, and employment opportunities.

Oñate assured the IP leaders that “inclusive agribusiness” is possible with the monitoring and support of the government.

“The government should be there to help and ensure that IP communities will be accorded with a just and equitable share in the development of their areas,” he said.

Among the identified potential crops are different banana varieties, cassava, cacao, robusta coffee, black pepper, fruit trees, and upland rice.

The DA-11 also conducted soil analysis in the area, located about 500 meters above sea level.

 **ABS-CBN News** ✓
10 hrs · 🌐

TINGNAN: Isang pawikan ang natagpuang patay sa Cadiz City, Negros Occidental, Biyernes.

Nakita ng mga residente ang green sea turtle sa mangrove area sa Barangay Cadiz Viejo. Hindi pa matukoy ang dahilan ng kamatayan nito ngunit nakitaan ng ito ng mga sugat.

Agad ding inilibing ng Philippine Coast Guard ang hayop. (📷: PCG-Negros Occidental) | ulat ni Martian Muyco, ABS-CBN News



🥺👍🥵 1.9K 124 Comments 47 Shares

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/27254475167/posts/10158200055945168/>

New, larger wave of locusts threatens millions in Africa

Associated Press / 08:07 PM April 10, 2020



In this photo taken Tuesday, March 31, 2020, desert locusts swarm over a tree in Kipsing, near Oldonyiro, in Isiolo county, Kenya. Weeks before the coronavirus spread through much of the world, parts of Africa were already threatened by another kind of plague, the biggest locust outbreak some countries had seen in 70 years, and now the second wave of the voracious insects, some 20 times the size of the first, is arriving. (Sven Torfinn/FAO via AP) MANDATORY CREDIT

KAMPALA, Uganda — Weeks before the coronavirus spread through much of the world, parts of Africa were already threatened by another kind of plague, the biggest locust outbreak some countries had seen in 70 years.

Now the second wave of the voracious insects, some 20 times the size of the first, is arriving. Billions of the young desert locusts are winging in from breeding grounds in Somalia in search of fresh vegetation springing up with seasonal rains.

Millions of already vulnerable people are at risk. And as they gather to try to combat the locusts, often in vain, they risk spreading the virus — a topic that comes a distant second for many in rural areas.

It is the locusts that “everyone is talking about,” said Yoweri Aboket, a farmer in Uganda. “Once they land in your garden they do total destruction. Some people will even tell you that the locusts are more destructive than the coronavirus. There are even some who don’t believe that the virus will reach here.”

Some farmers in Abokat’s village near the Kenyan border bang metal pans, whistle or throw stones to try to drive the locusts away. But mostly they watch in frustration, largely barred by a coronavirus lockdown from gathering outside their homes.

A failed garden of cassava, a local staple, means hunger. Such worries in the village of some 600 people are reflected across a large part of East Africa, including Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. The locust swarms also have been sighted in Djibouti, Eritrea, Tanzania, and Congo.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has called the locust outbreak, caused in part by climate change, “an unprecedented threat” to food security and livelihoods. Its officials have called this new wave some 20 times the size of the first.

“The current situation in East Africa remains extremely alarming as ... an increasing number of new swarms are forming in Kenya, southern Ethiopia, and Somalia,” a new FAO assessment said.

Favorable breeding conditions through May mean there likely will be another new round of swarms in late June and July, coinciding with the start of the harvest season, the agency said.

The United Nations has raised its aid appeal from \$76 million to \$153 million, saying immediate action is needed before more rainfall fuels further growth in locust numbers. So far, FAO has collected \$111 million in cash or pledges.

The locusts are “invading the Eastern Africa region in exceptionally large swarms like never seen before,” the Nairobi-based Climate Prediction and Application Center said.

The new swarms include “young adults,” voracious bugs “that eat more than the adult ones,” said Kenneth Mwangi, a satellite information analyst at the center.

Mwangi and other officials in Kenya cited difficulties in fighting the infestation as coronavirus-related travel restrictions slow cross-border travel and delay the delivery of pesticides.

The verification work of field officers has been curtailed, making it harder for the center to update regional prediction models, Mwangi said.

In rural Laikipia county, among the worst affected in Kenya, some are calling attention to the threat to commercial farms.

“I think, unfortunately, because of other things going on around the world, people are forgetting about the problem with the locusts. But it’s a very, very real problem,” farmer George Dodds told FAO.

Aerial spraying is the only effective way to control the locust outbreak. After the locusts crossed into Uganda for the first time since the 1960s, soldiers resorted to using hand-held spray pumps because of difficulties in obtaining the needed aircraft.

Uganda’s agriculture minister said authorities are unable to import enough pesticides from Japan, citing disruptions to international cargo shipments.

The government is yet to meet an additional budget of over \$4 million requested for locust control, the minister said.

The sum is substantial in a country where the president has been fundraising from wealthy people to help respond to the virus and its economic disruption. Health workers are threatening to strike over lack of protective gear.

Other countries face similar challenges.

In Ethiopia, where some 6 million people live in areas affected by the locust outbreak, the infestation if unchecked “will cause large-scale crop, pasture, and forest-cover loss, worsening food and feed insecurity,” FAO said.

Bands of immature locusts are forming in areas that include the country’s breadbasket, the Rift Valley region, it said.

Ethiopia’s agriculture minister has said efforts are underway to deploy six helicopters against the infestation that could last until late August.

But ministry spokesman Moges Hailu spoke of an ominous sign: The locust swarms are now appearing in locations where they had not been previously sighted.

Source: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1256828/new-larger-wave-of-locusts-threatens-millions-in-africa#ixzz6JFZwBInL>