ACTION AGAINST HUNGER - PHILIPPINES

EL NIÑO IMPACT MONITORING

20 October 2026

CONTEXT

The Philippines has entered a significant El Niño episode following the end of La Niña in March 2026. As of October 2026, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) – Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) reports **strong to very strong El Niño conditions** in the tropical Pacific. Current climate models still indicate that El Niño may reach its **peak intensity towards the end of 2026 and is likely to persist through the first half of 2027** (DOST-PAGASA, 2026a).

El Niño increases the likelihood of below-normal rainfall, dry spells and drought conditions, although impacts will vary geographically and can be temporarily interrupted by monsoon systems, tropical cyclones and localized rainfall. The overall assessment of September 2026, released on October 9, 2026, registered 51–100mm rainfall in all monitored areas of Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte, Surigao del Norte, and Zamboanga del Sur, corresponding in all cases to **only 41-80% of the normal rainfall for the period**, indicating **below-normal rainfall conditions** (DOST-PAGASA, 2026b). The rainfall deficit is occurring alongside **1.01–2.00°C warmer-than-normal temperatures in Surigao del Norte and Zamboanga City**, while in Maguindanao del Norte and del Sur registered near average monthly mean temperatures with a 0.5 °C variation (DOST-PAGASA, 2026b).



Considering the intensification of these conditions, by October 20, 2026, **a total of 218 municipality and city local government units (M/CLGUs) have declared State of Calamity,** mostly located in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) with 108 municipalities and cities, followed by Region II (Cagayan Valley Region) with 66 municipalities and cities, and Region XIII (Caraga Region) with 23 (Department of Social Welfare and Development [DSWD], 2026). As of the latest DOST-PAGASA (2026c) dry spell/drought assessment issued on 30 September 2026, **all monitored areas were classified under dry conditions**. Dry conditions are forecast to re-emerge in Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, and Surigao del Norte by December 2026, **potentially worsening to dry spell conditions in January 2027 and drought in February 2027**. In Zamboanga, conditions are expected to deteriorate earlier, with dry spell conditions forecasted from October to November 2026 and drought projected from December 2026 to March 2027.

The period from October to December 2026 should therefore be treated as a heightened monitoring and preparedness period, particularly for water availability, agricultural production, livelihoods, food security and climate-sensitive health risks. The greatest concern is the **potential cumulative effect of prolonged heat and rainfall deficits**, rather than a single dry episode.

Action Against Hunger is continuously and closely monitor the El Niño impact in its intervention through field level observations, interviews with communities, and consultation with LGUs selected areas in BARMM, Siargao Island, and Zamboanga City. This report examines the evolving El Niño situation and its observed and potential impacts in these areas as of 20 October 2026, with a focus on rainfall and dry conditions, temperature, water

availability, agriculture, commodity prices, livelihoods, food security, nutrition, and health. It also tracks actions undertaken by Action Against Hunger, government authorities, and other stakeholders to inform early action and operations. This report will be updated on a regular basis.

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

HIGHLIGHTS AS OF OCTOBER 2026	
STATUS (NATIONWIDE)	**STRONG TO VERY STRONG (DOST-PAGASA, 2026a)**
ESTIMATED PEOPLE AFFECTED (NATIONWIDE)	**≈451,889 PEOPLE (NDRRMC, 2026)**
AREAS UNDER MONITORING	Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Zamboanga City
BELOW-NORMAL RAINFALL	Limited rainfall since September 2026. Around 51–100mm of rainfall was recorded as of 9 October 2026, corresponding to only 41–80% of the normal rainfall for the period.
WATER LEVELS DECLINING	Reduced water supply, lower well production, and declining local water sources are reported in parts of Maguindanao del Sur, with increasing reliance on refilling stations. In Surigao del Norte, 95–100% of water sources remain functional and no significant shortages have been reported.
FOOD SECURITY PRESSURE	Some households reported shifting to less expensive foods and reducing consumption from three meals to two per day. In Zamboanga City, households also reported borrowing food or purchasing on credit. Commodity prices continue to increase due to fuel costs, reduced agricultural production, and lower fish catches, with reported increases of approximately 1–2% in Pagalungan.
CROPS & LIVELIHOODS AFFECTED	Reduced water availability and irrigation constraints continue to affect agriculture in Maguindanao del Sur. Crop losses, declining yields, delayed planting, lower fish catches, and reduced income have been reported, prompting some households to diversify into alternative livelihoods. No significant drought-related impacts on agriculture and livelihoods were reported in monitored areas of Surigao del Norte.
HEAT-RELATED CONCERNS	Heat stroke and common colds were reported in monitored communities in Maguindanao del Sur. In Surigao del Norte, no significant increase in acute malnutrition or climate-sensitive diseases has been reported, and health services remain operational.
FIRE, HAZE & OTHER EMERGING RISKS	No reported incidents of wildfires or land burning have been recorded

Based on consolidated official reports, latest National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) situational report, and monitoring of Action Against Hunger Field Offices as of 20 October 2026

Water Availability, Sanitation, & Hygiene

Water scarcity is increasingly evident across monitored communities. In all areas, most potable water is now purchased from refilling stations and in remote areas, households dig deeper wells or share water with neighbors.

In BARMM, in the Municipality of Pagalungan and Datu Montawal, current observations indicate **visible declining water availability, with reduced water supply for domestic use, lower well water production, and visibly reduced volumes in local water sources**. Households have been advised to conserve water, and the majority of potable water is now purchased from refilling stations. In Pagalungan, some households continue to rely on deep wells, and water sharing arrangements with neighbors.

In contrast, water conditions remain generally stable across the monitored municipalities of **General Luna, San Isidro, and Burgos in Siargao**. Approximately 95-100% of water sources remain functional, with households continuing to access water through communal systems, springs, deep wells, and Level III water supply systems.

No significant water shortages were reported in Siargao as of this reporting period, and occasional rainfall has helped maintain water availability despite generally dry and humid conditions.

Agriculture and Livelihoods

Agricultural production and livelihoods are continuously affected by prolonged dry conditions in some monitored areas, particularly where reduced water availability is constraining farming activities, irrigation-dependent production, and fishing livelihoods.

In Datu Montawal and Pagalungan in BARMM, reduced water availability is affecting agricultural production, with **reported declines in crop yields and damage to agricultural land.** In Datu Montawal, due to El Niño, yield per hectare reportedly declined **from 32.69 mt/ha to 23.49 mt/ha**, with **14.5 hectares totally damaged and 135.9 hectares partially damaged**. In Pagalungan, impacts are more severe, with yield per hectare reportedly **declining from 48.36 mt/ha to 4.8 mt/ha, alongside 119.1 hectares of totally damaged farmland and 15.4 hectares partially damaged**. Reduced water production from irrigation systems continues to affect farming activities, prompting farmers to delay planting until sufficient rainfall occurs and limit field work during periods of extreme heat, especially in Zamboanga City, whose Office of City Agriculturist reported crop damage and **production losses amounting to approximately ₱1.02 million, particularly among rice farmers**. While the local government units of General Luna, San Isidro, and Burgos in Siargao have not reported significant drought-related impacts on agriculture or livelihoods on a broader scale, some farmers have indicated that the prevailing weather conditions are already affecting crop productivity and harvest outcomes.

Food Security and Commodity Prices

Food security pressures are becoming evident in some monitored areas as households adjust their consumption and expenditure patterns.

In Datu Montawal and Pagalungan, communities reported **relying on less expensive food** to cope with current conditions, while some families are consuming **only two meals per day instead of the usual three**. At the same time, **prices of basic commodities have continued to increase**, driven by recurring fuel price hikes, reduced agricultural production, and lower fish catches associated with prolonged dry conditions. In Pagalungan, basic commodity prices were estimated to have increased by approximately 1–2% during the monitoring period. In Barangays Kasanyangan and Rio Hondo in Zamboanga City, affected households reported shifting to **cheaper food options, borrowing food, or purchasing food on credit** from nearby stores and relatives, while some parents reduced their own food consumption to prioritize children's meals. Communities also reported **increasing prices of rice, corn, fish, and vegetables,** which have increased household expenditures and reduced purchasing power among vulnerable households.

Nutrition and Health

Health impacts associated with prolonged dry and hot conditions remain limited across most monitored areas, although some heat-related illnesses have been reported. In Datu Montawal and Pagalungan, communities reported cases of **heat stroke and common colds** during the monitoring period. Minor common health concerns reported in General Luna included acute respiratory infections, diarrhea, and occasional heat-related illnesses, although no unusual increase was observed. In Zamboanga City, no major health impacts related to El Niño were reported during the monitoring period. According to the City Health Office, dengue cases have declined, although monitoring and surveillance activities remain ongoing. No increase in acute malnutrition was reported across the monitored locations.

EMERGING NEEDS

The current findings indicate a need to implement early targeted interventions in already impacted communities and strengthen preparedness before the projected transition to dry conditions, potentially dry spell conditions and drought later in 2026 and early 2027. Priority needs include:

- Safe and reliable water access, particularly in communities where handpumps and wells are drying up.
- Water-source augmentation and household water treatment, including support for alternative sources, water rationing and conservation, and safe treatment.
- Agricultural support, particularly for farmers facing reduced irrigation, delayed planting, crop stress, and potential production losses.
- Food-security and livelihood assistance for households experiencing reduced agricultural/fishing income, reduced meal frequency, and reliance on less preferred or less expensive foods.

- Support climate-resilient and water-efficient production, through appropriate farm inputs and alternative livelihood options where traditional activities are becoming less viable.
- Heat- and water-related health preparedness, including prevention of heat illness, diarrheal disease, and other climate-sensitive conditions, particularly among vulnerable groups.

GOVERNMENT ACTIONS AND RESPONSE MEASURES

During the reporting period of September to October Week 1 of 2026, national and regional governments strengthened preparedness for El Niño through agricultural assistance, water-resource management, food-supply measures, and targeted relief for drought-affected households. The following actions were reported by official government sources; implementation status and geographic coverage are indicated where available.

Government / Region	Reported action and status
National **Department of Agriculture (DA) and Department of Budget and Management (DBM)**	The DA is implementing **₱6.2 billion under the Unified Package for Livelihoods, Industry, Food, and Transport (UPLIFT)** to support farmers and fisherfolk facing increased costs and initial El Niño impacts. It has sought an **additional ₱10 billion for El Niño mitigation, including solar-powered irrigation, pumps, aerators, and biofertilizers**, while **₱3.5 billion has been identified for solar irrigation facilities.**
National **National Irrigation Administration (NIA)**	The NIA is using **groundwater maps** from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) to **identify potential sources for solar-powered irrigation**. Measures also include **strengthening the inventory and maintenance of existing solar irrigation systems and repairing or rehabilitating older pump irrigation facilities**.
National **DA and National Food Authority (NFA)**	The DA is advancing the **procurement of rice, fertilizers, drought-tolerant seeds, and other agricultural inputs**, while **strengthening irrigation assessments and climate-risk mapping** to guide water allocation, planting calendars, and crop selection. The NFA has expanded its **active warehouse network to improve rice storage capacity**. Cloud seeding has started in drought-affected areas of Isabela and Negros, subject to suitable conditions, while a separate **₱6.2-million operation proposed for parts of Caraga in October–November** has not been confirmed as implemented. These actions have not been verified in the monitored areas.
National **Office of the President, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and National Water Resources Board (NWRB)**	The government reported inter-agency preparations for El Niño. The DENR announced **renewed water-conservation measures** and coordination with local governments, while the NWRB announced a reduction in Metro Manila's **water allocation from 52–53 to 44 cubic metres per second beginning October**. This allocation measure is specific to Metro Manila and does not establish water restrictions in Mindanao or Siargao.
National and BARMM **Department of Health (DOH) and Ministry of Health (MOH)**	Through Department Memorandum No. 2026-0369 dated 30 July 2026, DOH reiterated **mandatory El Niño preparedness measures for health facilities, including maintaining safe water supplies and emergency reserves, strengthening sanitation and hygiene**, ensuring essential medicines and supplies, preparing for increased heat-related and waterborne illnesses, and maintaining service continuity. Regional health offices and MOH-BARMM were directed to **disseminate the policies, monitor compliance, provide technical assistance, and consolidate Health Facility Preparedness Tool** submissions. The directive reinforces earlier heat-health guidelines covering risk communication, surveillance, case management, and protection of vulnerable populations. Implementation in monitored municipalities remains to be verified.
BARMM Region **Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR)**	BARMM remained under a **region-wide state of calamity** declared in May 2026 due to the combined effects of the oil crisis and El Niño. During the reporting period, **MAFAR reported ₱5,000 in financial assistance for each of 30,891 validated affected farmers and fisherfolk**, with the initial 270 recipients receiving checks during the ceremonial distribution.
Caraga Region	Authorities pursued a **proposed ₱6.2-million cloud-seeding operation** for October–November to address water shortages and protect agricultural

DA Caraga and Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (RDRRMC)	land. The measure was planned for drought-affected parts of Caraga, including areas of Agusan del Sur; the announcement did not confirm that operations had begun during the reporting period.
Various LGUs	**A total of 218 M/CLGUs across the country have declared State of Calamity as of writing** due to the intensification of El Niño's conditions. **BARMM accounted for the largest share of affected M/CLGUs, totaling 108**, followed by Region II (Cagayan Valley Region) (66) and Region XIII (Caraga Region) (23). Additional declarations came from 12 M/CLGUs in Region V (Bicol Region), four in Region IV-A (CALABARZON), two in Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), and one each in Region IV-B (MIMAROPA), Region VIII (Eastern Visayas Region), and Region XII (SOCCSKSARGEN).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Based on the current situation and identified gaps, Action Against Hunger has outlined key recommendations and proposed next steps.

El Niño Assessment and Operations Monitoring		• Continue El Niño monitoring at regional, provincial, municipal and barangay levels, with particular attention to water availability, agricultural production, livelihoods, food security, and health. • Establish consistent fixed-point monitoring of water levels to strengthen comparison across monitoring periods. • Coordinate with other stakeholders and LGUs to share El Niño-related information on the situation, needs, and emerging impacts. • Coordinate to ensure that El Niño-related interventions are aligned with and complement planned and ongoing interventions of other stakeholders and government agencies.
Activation of Anticipatory Action/ Rapid Response Mechanism		• Use the ongoing monitoring findings to identify trigger points for anticipatory action and rapid response, particularly where water sources are drying, agricultural losses are increasing, or households begin adopting more severe coping strategies. • Prioritize communities are already experiencing severe water shortages, while maintaining readiness in other monitored areas. • Review available prepositioned supplies and response capacity, including water treatment supplies and food stocks. • Coordinate closely with LGUs and relevant government agencies on thresholds for escalation.
Proposed Multi-sectoral Interventions	**Water, Sanitation, & Hygiene**	• Prioritize safe water access and water-source augmentation in communities where handpumps, wells, and local water systems are drying up. • Support household- and community-level water treatment. • Strengthen water conservation messaging and safe water-storage practices. • Assess the feasibility of emergency water trucking or alternative water-source arrangements in communities where existing water systems are no longer adequate. • Assess and support access to safe water in public places and institutions, including hospitals, markets, schools, and other critical facilities, to address current needs and strengthen preparedness. • Ensure access to adequate water for livestock in water-stressed communities.
	Nutrition and Health	• Strengthen monitoring of heat stroke, diarrheal disease, flu-like illnesses, and other climate-sensitive health conditions • Promote heat-risk prevention, including appropriate work/rest practices and protection of vulnerable groups • Strengthen health messaging and community measures related to safe water, hygiene and prevention of waterborne disease.

		• Monitor nutrition outcomes where reduced meal frequency and reliance on cheaper foods are reported. • Coordinate with health authorities on respiratory protection and risk communication related to transboundary haze.
	Food Security and Livelihoods	• Conduct regular validation of crop losses and livelihood impacts. • Support affected farmers with appropriate farm inputs, seedlings and water-efficient/climate-resilient production practices • **Monitor nutrition outcomes and food consumption patterns in communities reporting reduced meal frequency and increased reliance on low-cost foods or food credit**. • Continue monitoring food prices and household coping strategies. • Encourage livestock protection measures, including access to water sources, shade structures, and feed supplementation. • Promote water-efficient household food production practices, such as home gardening and water conservation, to support food security.
	Protection	• Monitor protection risks associated with food insecurity, crop and food theft, water scarcity and potential displacement. • Monitor the situation of households in GIDA areas exposed to potential evacuation. • Strengthen protection risk assessment and referral mechanisms for households affected by food insecurity, water scarcity, livelihood losses, and potential displacement, prioritizing vulnerable households and GIDA communities.
	Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation	• Strengthening community and LGU preparedness for the potential escalation from below-normal rainfall to dry condition and dry spell. • Support LGUs and partner communities to review and, where necessary, develop or activate El Niño-specific contingency plans, building on existing disaster risk management and contingency plans. • Strengthen the capacity of LGUs and partner communities to monitor local El Niño conditions, including water levels, rainfall, agricultural conditions, and other relevant indicators, through coordination with MDRRMOs and community-level key informant interviews. • Consider tabletop exercises with municipal and provincial governments to test planning and response arrangements for El Niño, aligned with existing municipal, provincial, and regional plans. • Strengthen coordination with Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR), MAOs, and other relevant government agencies to share assessment findings from the affected communities and align preparedness and anticipatory action measures. • Update transboundary haze and potential power/utility interruptions in contingency planning as compounding risks.
	Cross-cutting activities	• Maintain regular coordination with DOST-PAGASA, LGUs, MAFAR, National Irrigation Authority (NIA), health authorities, and other relevant stakeholders. • Apply preventive and responsive gender-sensitive and environmental considerations throughout activities planning and implementation

SOURCES

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3. DOST-PAGASA. (2026b). *Rainfall Monitoring and Temperature Monitoring.* https://www.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/climate/climate-monitoring
4. DOST-PAGASA. (2026c). *Drought Dry Spell/ Drought Assessment issued 30th of September 2026.* https://pubfiles.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/pagasaweb/files/climate/dryspelldrought/Drought%20and%20Dry%20Spell%20Assessment.pdf

5. DSWD. (2026). *As reported by local news on 15th of October 2026, 218 lugar, nasa state of calamity dahil sa epekto ng El Niño | One North Central Luzon*. https://www.gmanetwork.com/regionaltv/onenorthcentralluzon/160485/218-lugar-nasa-state-of-calamity-dahil-sa-epekto-ng-el-nio-one-north-central-luzon/video/
6. Local Government Units / MDRRMO / BLGU field reports and assessments, including Pagalungan, Datu Montawal, Sultan sa Barongis, South Upi, Mamasapano, Shariff Aguak, SGA municipalities, Burgos and Zamboanga City.
7. NDRRMC. (2026). *Situational Report No. 11 for the Effect of El Nino (2026)*. https://ndrrmc.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Situational-Report-No.11-for-the-Effects-of-El-Nino-2026.pdf

PHOTOS



In photo: The river's water volume visibly increased following localized thunderstorms upstream. However, significant siltation and exposed riverbed areas remain, indicating that water levels are still below normal.

Date: September 25, 2026
Location: Dimalagos Creek, located in Brgy. Batungkayo, Datu Montawal, Maguindanao del Sur. This creek is connected to the Rio Grande De Mindanao or Pulangi River
Photo source: Maresa Batua
Coordinates: 7° 06′ 12″ N, 124° 43′ 57″ E
Observations: The river exhibits significant siltation, with sediment deposits accumulating along the river channel. Although rainfall was recorded due to localized thunderstorms upstream within the Mindanao River Basin, water levels remain below normal, with portions of the riverbed still exposed.







In photo: (Left and middle) Vegetation has visibly improved following recent rainfall, with grasses appearing greener and no longer showing signs of surface desiccation. However, the underlying soil remains relatively dry, indicating that rainfall has improved surface vegetation conditions, but has not yet sufficiently replenished deeper soil moisture.
(Right): Previously exposed silt and sand deposits were now fully submerged following rainfall upstream, resulting in increased river water levels and flow. However, despite the observed improvement, river conditions remain below normal levels.

Date: September 24, 2026
Location: Brgy. Talitay, Datu Montawal, Maguindanao del Sur
Photo source: Moktar Abubakar
Coordinates: 6° 59' 26.42" N 124° 44' 34.38" E
Observations: Recent rainfall has significantly increased river water levels and flow, fully submerged previously exposed sandbars and caused muddy-brown water due to increased runoff and sediment load. Despite this improvement, river conditions remain below normal levels. Soil and crop conditions also show partial recovery, with greener crops and improved surface moisture. However, deeper soil moisture remains relatively low, indicating that agricultural water conditions have not yet fully recovered.



Date: September 14, 2026
Location: Brgy. Jamoyaon, Del Carmen, Siargao Island
Photo source: Eddie Fecundo for Action Against Hunger
Coordinates: not indicated
Observations: The vegetable garden of Cancohoy Farmer's Association at the Annex Farm in Brgy. Jamoyaon has been severely affected by extreme heat. String beans and other vegetable crops have withered and died due to high temperatures and inadequate water supply, as the farm relies primarily on rainfall and has limited access to alternative water sources. Most association members have experienced crop losses, prompting them to request drought-resistant vegetable seeds to help sustain production and strengthen their resilience to prolonged dry conditions.



Date: September 22, 2026
Location: Municipality of San Isidro, Siargao Island
Photo source: Ana Nico Clement for Action Against Hunger
Coordinates: not indicated
Observations: The agricultural land appears dry with pronounced deep cracks running across the soil surface. The ground is compacted, dusty, and lacks visible moisture, indicating a prolonged period of drought and a significant reduction in its water-retention capacity, which may adversely affect crop growth and agricultural productivity.