International Medical Corps

SITUATION UPDATE

Philippines Leptospirosis Epidemic
Situation Report #1
September 10, 2026

A flooded street in Hagonoy, Bulacan province, one of the country's high-risk areas for leptospirosis.

Leptospirosis—a bacterial infection that can lead to kidney damage, meningitis, liver failure, respiratory issues and even death—has re-emerged as a public health concern in the Philippines following heavy rainfall and flooding, which facilitates transmission through exposure to floodwaters contaminated with the urine of infected rats and other animals. Especially severe southwest monsoon conditions throughout August have led to persistent and heavy rainfall, triggering widespread flooding across Metro Manila, Central Luzon, and parts of the Visayas. To date, the Department of Health (DoH) has recorded 6,253 cases and 378 deaths caused by the disease nationwide.

Metro Manila, where leptospirosis cases have exceeded the epidemic threshold, is of particular concern. Manila city and Quezon city have recorded the highest cumulative number of cases, followed by Caloocan city and Taguig city. The Manila City Health Office reported on September 7 that the proportion of reported leptospirosis cases had increased to 3.48% from 1.27% the previous week, indicating a rapid rise in cases over a short period. Several city government hospitals—including Justice Jose Abad Santos General Hospital, Ospital ng Maynila and St. Ana Hospital—and have reportedly reached full capacity amid an increase in patients. At Ospital ng Maynila, the Emergency Room is operating at 300% capacity. In response to the escalating number of cases and pressure on health facilities, the Manila city government declared a leptospirosis epidemic on September 7.

FAST FACTS

- Throughout August, an usually strong southwest monsoon has caused severe flooding in Metro Manila, Central Luzon and parts of the Visayas, leading to an outbreak of leptospirosis. As of September 7, the Department of Health reported 6,253 cases and 378 deaths, prompting Manila City to declare an epidemic. The situation underscores the urgent need to strengthen surveillance, detection, treatment capacity, risk communication and preventive measures, especially in flood-affected communities.

OUR FOOTPRINT

- International Medical Corps has been active in the Philippines since 2013, providing humanitarian assistance and emergency response to communities affected by major disasters across the country, including typhoons, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

OUR RESPONSE

- International Medical Corps had already integrated leptospirosis-preparedness programming into our ongoing activities by prepositioning doxycycline and other essential medicines at the rural health units (RHUs) in Calumpit and Hagonoy, Bulacan province, ahead of the monsoon season. Thanks in part to the fact that the RHUs have utilized the donated doxycycline as part of their leptospirosis prevention efforts, leptospirosis cases have so far not been reported in Calumpit and Hagonoy, despite prolonged flooding. This highlights the importance of early preparedness and timely prepositioning of essential medicines.

The situation underscores the urgent need to strengthen disease surveillance, as well as early detection and treatment, health-facility capacity, risk communication and preventive measures, particularly in flood-affected communities and among people with direct exposure to contaminated floodwaters. With the southwest monsoon and typhoon season expected to continue through November, further episodes of heavy rainfall and flooding are likely, creating favorable conditions for continued leptospirosis transmission and increased cases, and placing additional pressure on already stretched health facilities.

International Medical Corps Response

Recognizing the importance of preparedness and the potential health risks during the monsoon season, International Medical Corps prepositioned essential medicines, including doxycycline, at the rural health units (RHUs) in Calumpit and Hagonoy. The RHUs, which have been actively engaging in implementing leptospirosis prevention measures, have utilized the donated doxycycline to support their prevention efforts, helping to augment local health resources

and enable timely preventive action. Thankfully, no leptospirosis cases have so far been reported in Calumpit or Hagonoy, Bulacan province, despite the prolonged flooding and risk of leptospirosis transmission. This underscores the importance of early preparedness, close coordination with local health authorities and prepositioning essential medicines to strengthen local response capacity.

As the rainy season is expected to continue through November, International Medical Corps will continue to monitor the emergence of leptospirosis cases. We will continue to support the RHUs in Calumpit and Hagonoy in their leptospirosis prevention efforts, particularly as floodwaters may recede slowly in these areas. International Medical Corps will also explore opportunities to scale up our response in other areas affected by flooding and at risk of a leptospirosis outbreak. This may include strengthening event- and case-based surveillance and referral mechanisms, including RHU and BHS staff training, implementing risk communication and community engagement activities to strengthen community awareness and promote preventive practices, and supporting timely access to appropriate preventive measures by providing essential medications.