

Access still an obstacle to reaching stricken communities on Indonesian island: UN agencies

Aid is getting through to victims of last Friday's deadly earthquake and tsunami, which struck the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, but stricken communities are still in dire need, UN aid agencies said on Friday.

According to the Government of Indonesia, the official death toll has reached nearly 1,600 people, amid unconfirmed reports that more than 1,000 people have been buried in a housing complex, in the city of Palu, which suffered the full-force of the deadly tsunami wave.

Drinking water has been identified as one of the most urgent needs in Donggala, one of the worst-affected districts on the island, along with shelter, healthcare and psychosocial support.

In other areas, electricity has been restored and markets have reopened. In the most badly affected places, however, access is still a significant obstacle, said Paul Dillon, spokesperson for the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#): "Part of the problem is that the areas that are closest to the tsunami; where the tsunami hit hardest, are literally buried in mud."

"You have people circling those areas trying to get in but it's literally inaccessible", he said, adding that even standing just 200 metres from the remains of buildings "you can't actually get into those areas because the mud is thigh- or waist-deep."

Help has now reached some of the worst-affected communities including in Sigi, Palu and Donggala districts. But needs remain critical according to rescuers, including in the town of Banawa, said a spokesperson for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies ([IFRC](#)).



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Five-month-old Asifa Humaira is given milk by her mother in an evacuation tent on the RRI office yard on Jalan Kartini, East Lolu, Palu City, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia (2 October).

“They’ve described this as the worst affected area,” said Matthew Cochrane. “All houses built along the coastline were swept away by the tsunami. Those who survived have sought shelter in the surrounding hills and their most urgent needs include emergency healthcare, shelter, blankets and diapers. There’s a lot of kids there apparently.”

In coordination with the Government of Indonesia, IOM is preparing to send an aid convoy from the south of the island to the north, where needs are greatest.

“Tomorrow morning, an 11-truck convoy will depart from Makassar carrying about 83,000 litres of water, in 19-litre plastic jugs that can be reused by the people in the area,” IOM spokesperson Paul Dillon said, adding the convoy was bound for Donggala.

Providing emergency healthcare is also challenging, according to the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA), which said that around 2,500 people have been seriously injured in the disaster.

“A lot of hospitals, clinics have been destroyed,” said spokesperson Jens Laerke. “So, if you are injured or wounded, you might have a lot of difficulty getting help there.”

The earthquake and subsequent tsunami that struck Palu, Central Sulawesi, on 28 September are estimated to have destroyed 10,000 houses and damaged a further 55,000.



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On 3 October 2018 in Indonesia, the ruins of buildings damaged by a tsunami following an earthquake in Loli Pesua Village, Donggala Regency, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Many thousands of people are still too afraid to stay in their houses, especially at night, owing to the ongoing aftershocks. To help them, \$15 million has already been released from the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund ([CERF](#)).

On Friday, [OCHA](#) announced the launch of a \$50.5 million appeal for immediate relief activities, to complement the Government response.

"The earthquake and tsunami effectively cut off much of Palu and Donggala for several days due to landslides and damage to infrastructure, and has created significant logistical and access challenges," UN Resident Coordinator in Indonesia, [Ms. Anita Nirody](#), said.

"The Response Plan outlines not only the immediate relief items that the international humanitarian community will prioritize, but also the logistics support needed to get aid to all those who need it."