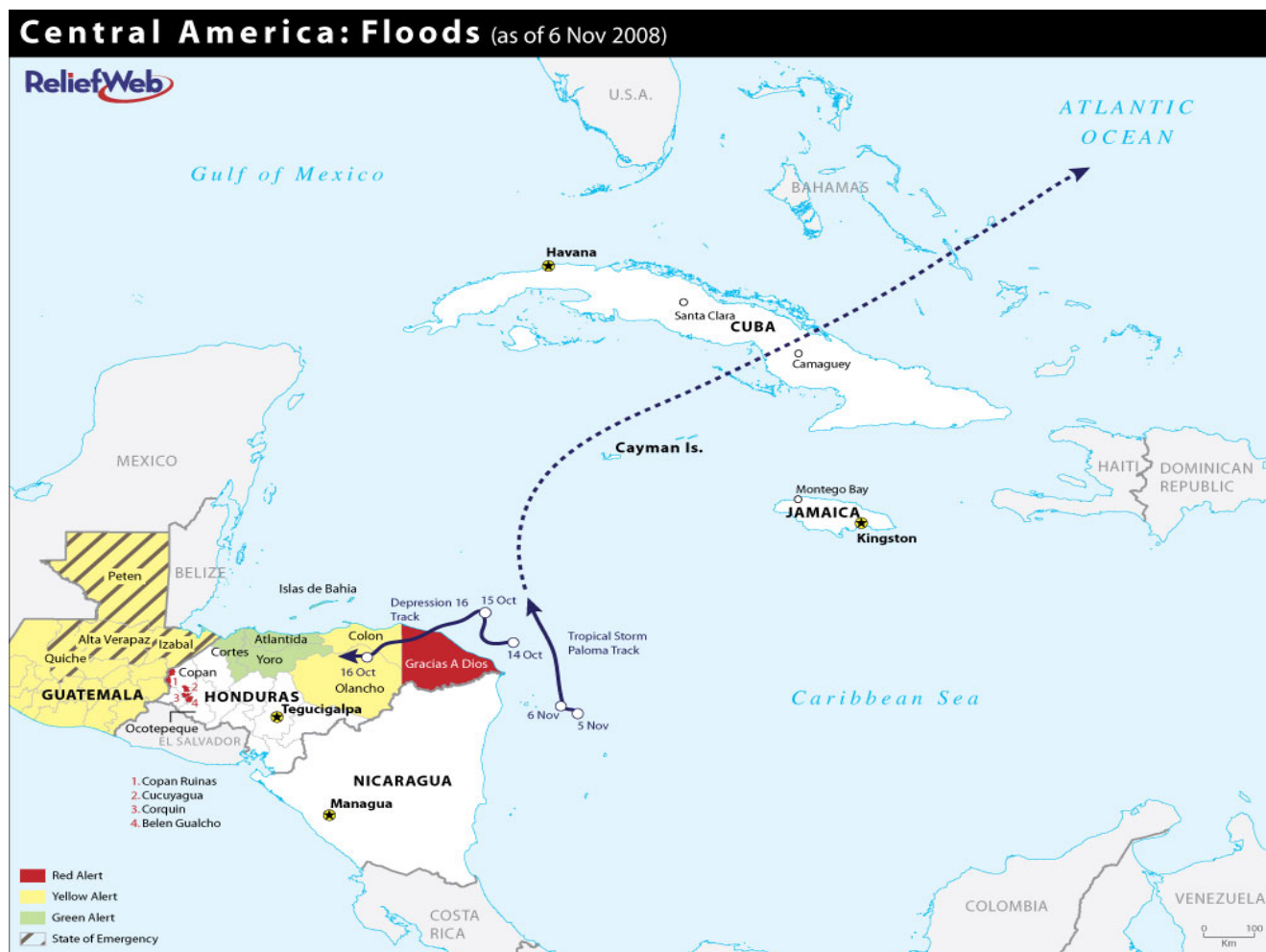


**Situation Report 9 – Honduras and Central America Floods
11 November 2008**

This situation report is based on information received from, the UN Emergency Technical Team (UNETT) in the affected countries, the Regional Office in Panama and the National Hurricane Centre.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Honduras and Guatemala are experiencing an intense rainy season, surpassing the precipitation levels generated by Hurricane Mitch ten years ago.
- The Flash Appeal for Honduras is only 10% funded and urgent support is required as some 322,000 persons are still in need of humanitarian assistance.
- In Guatemala, the number of affected persons has reached 180,000. Donors are encouraged to respond to the appeal for assistance by the Government of Guatemala launched on 3 November.



SITUATION

1. Tropical Depression No. 16 made landfall in northern Honduras on 16 October and has been slowly crossing over Central America causing heavy rains from northern Costa Rica to south-eastern Mexico. The system affected the countries of Costa Rica, Belize, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala with heavy rains which led to



flooding and mudslides. In addition to a cold front over the region, tropical depression 17, then Paloma, has formed last week and has further affected Honduras.

HONDURAS

2. Due to a series of meteorological events (Tropical Depression 16, low depression and swell), the Government of Honduras had declared a state of emergency on 19 October and formally requested humanitarian assistance on 20 October. In view of Tropical Depression 17, COPECO had declared the Red Alert in the Departments of Cabo de Gracias de Dios, in the North of Olancho, in the oriental part of Colon, as well as in the municipalities of Corquin, Cucuyagua, Copan, Belen Gualcho, in Ocotepeque.

3. As the soil is already saturated, notably also as a result of a cold front over Honduras and additional rains, the humanitarian situation is constantly evolving. The Resident Coordinator has reporting that the number of persons affected has increased to 320,000, with over 70,000 in need of shelter. Sixty persons lost their lives. The number of persons in need of food assistance is also increasing and some 50,000 persons could not be accessed as they remain in isolated communities. Some 100,000 of the affected populations have no access to safe drinking water, of which 35,000 are children. Approximately 51,000 children are not attending schools, as around 300 schools are used as shelters. Some 233 education centres have no electricity or water and need to be repaired.

4. COPECO is coordinating relief activities and continues its distribution of humanitarian aid to all those affected due to the heavy rains. Shelter, food and water and sanitation, as well as rehabilitation of houses and agriculture are a priority. Public health is an area of concern as wells were contaminated due to landslides. Malaria and cholera are endemic in the region however no outbreaks were reported. Gastrointestinal diseases and acute respiratory infections are also a concern. Psychosocial support is required especially for children. Early recovery will also be needed to generate economic activities in the affected areas and rebuild houses. For those previously affected, returns are difficult as the population often finds their homes flooded or in need of rehabilitation. Hence the situation in shelters remains very fluid.

5. The Government is preparing a recovery and rehabilitation plan that has been developed, taking into account the support on early recovery requested under the Flash Appeal.

6. The Flash Appeal is requesting USD 17 million to urgently assist those affected with food, health, shelter, water and sanitation, education and early recovery assistance for the next six months. It is only 10% funded, including funds received from the CERF (USD 1,501,344).

7. UNICEF assistance for this emergency totals USD 716,000. WFP delivered more than 370 MT of food aid to assist nearly 16,000 of the most vulnerable families living in shelters in isolated areas. In coordination with the National Authorities, WFP has provided food to affected population with a 50 MT of food aid already prepositioned. So far 3,482 families have received a 10 days ration of food assistance.

8. WHO is reprogramming regular funds in order to mobilize medical teams and to purchase emergency and general medicines. PAHO/WHO has also mobilized regional experts in water and sanitation, disaster management and the SUMA deployment. UNFPA is working with the Ministry of Health. Christian Aid is carrying out emergency relief in Honduras. IOM is carrying out distributions of NFIs in shelters to improve shelters conditions and on resttelments with the Government. IOM, UNICEF and WHO will carry out psycho social support programmes for the vulnerable groups affected by the floods.

9. OCHA Regional Office in Panama has deployed its Disaster Response Advisor to assist the UNDAC team in its hand over and on coordination issues as the Team departed on 7 November. The Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, in cooperation with the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, has deployed a team of geologists to Honduras to start cooperating with the authorities in identifying risk zones from land- and mudslides. The risk of further death and injury from landslides is high, following the saturation of slopes caused by the heavy rains .This deployment follows a

recommendation from the UNDAC team, as a subsequent request from the competent authorities (COPECO). The team will work closely with UNDP and COPECO and will make on-site recommendations to the authorities on mitigation measures.

10. The Resident Coordinator is working towards formalizing a Humanitarian Country Team. IOM has dispatched an expert in shelter; BCPR, FAO, WFP, UNICEF and UNDP sent technical personnel, while UNDP has provided USD 150,000 in cash contribution.

GUATEMALA

11. In Guatemala, according to the CONRED, more than 15 days of consecutive rains as a result of Tropical Depression 16 have claimed the lives of 17 persons, affected 30,000 families (or 180,000 persons), destroyed 67,000 hectares of land, contaminated many wells and inflicted serious damage to the infrastructure. Approximately 10,674 families are in shelter; 38 schools, 73 bridges, 70 roads and 6 health centres have been affected. The effects of Tropical Depression 16 have affected the whole country, with Alta Verapaz, El Peten, Izabal, and Quiche, the most directly impacted. Some 27 municipalities in these departments were declared under a State of emergency. The departments and their affected counties are among the poorest of the country, with a human development index (HDI) lower than the national average. The population predominantly lives in rural areas, with high percentages of indigenous population, and limited access to basic social services. Rains affected 57% of the national territory. Some communities remain inaccessible.

12. The affected area is the principal producer of basic grains in Guatemala, mainly producing corn, rice, bean, and large banana plantations. According to the Ministry of Agriculture some 67,119 hectare were damaged with an approximated loss of Quetzals 19,336,344 (USD 2,613,019.00). In the month of May, with the beginning of the rainy season, more than 65% of the production was lost due to flooding. With Tropical Depression No. 16, more than 80% of the production of basic grains of the second crop was lost. As a result, the affected population will not have enough food for the next three months and a rise in food prices is expected, worsening the chronic food insecurity in Guatemala. The damage to infrastructure, with 2,000 roads affected, and health centers equipment is affecting the capability to care for the needs of the affected population.

13. The President Alvaro Colom has assigned approximately USD 6.5 million to respond to the crisis. The Vice President has requested international assistance on 3 November (see <http://www.conred.org.gt>) amounting to Quetzals 500 million (or USD 66 million) for water and sanitation, health, protection (psychological support), agriculture and early recovery. The priority needs are for water and sanitation, health, food security and nutrition, protection of the vulnerable population (psychological support and protection of women and children) and rehabilitation of the agriculture sector. Various NFIs such as cooking kits, clothes, mattresses, household items and agricultural utensils and tools are needed.

14. The CONRED is mobilizing its immediate response teams in the various affected municipalities and is coordinating the response. The ministries of Health, Public Works and Agriculture are assessing the damages and the financial costs in the affected areas. The humanitarian partners are closely coordinating with the Government at the central and local levels. UN and NGOs Assessments team are carrying out aerial joint assessments on 3 and 4 November. Sectoral tables are working well according to the Humanitarian Network Contingency Plan (Health, WASH, Food security and nutrition, Protection). A CERF application was prepared by the UN and partners through the Humanitarian Network (IASC Country team) and is being reviewed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator. WFP has already delivered 80 MT of food covering 22,000 families. The Humanitarian network, including NGOs such as Mercy Corps, CARE, CRS, OXFAM, Save the Children as well as the Red Cross are distributing relief items in the affected areas while carrying out additional damage assessments. Regular coordination meetings are held with all partners and donors. The Spanish Cooperation Agency AECIDI has allocated EURO 50,000 to respond to the Government appeal.



REGIONAL RESPONSE

15. Some CHF 271,000 (USD 247,715 or EUR 172,611) has been allocated from the Federation’s Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the National Societies of Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua in delivering immediate assistance to 1,500 families. Unearmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged. The Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation for Central America and Mexico are communicating with and providing support to the National Societies. Three PADRU disaster management delegates have been deployed to Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua to coordinate initial relief actions with the National Societies.

16. ECHO has allocated USD 2.8 million to support the emergency operation in Honduras and Guatemala through NGOs, UN agencies and the Red Cross Movement.

17. The OCHA Regional Office in Panama is closely monitoring the situation and is in contact with the Resident Coordinators and UNETTs in the affected countries. More information can be found on Reliefweb at www.reliefweb.int and REDHUM at www.redhum.org. Humanitarian organizations and donors are encouraged to report all contributions (cash and in-kind) to OCHA’s Financial Tracking Service at fts@reliefweb.int or through the on-line contribution form at www.reliefweb.int/fts, where a list of already made contributions is available.

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