

CENTRAL AMERICA: FLOODS AND LANDSLIDES

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The Disaster

Annual rainfall in Central America has been intensifying over the past two weeks. Whilst spared the impact of the recent hurricanes so far, the region is still vulnerable following the effects of last year's Hurricane Mitch. The situation in Honduras, however, has become serious. With continuing heavy rainfall nine vulnerable communities in Tegucigalpa, Choluteca and Yoro have been evacuated.

The Honduras Emergency Commission (COPECO) has stated that the El Cajon Dam, the largest in Honduras and the one that burst during Hurricane Mitch, has reached critical levels forcing the authorities to begin some limited discharging to relieve the pressure. That may increase the risk of flooding particularly along the Chamelecón and Ulua Rivers with consequential risk to those communities in the Valle de Sula. Armed Forces personnel with outboard motor boats have been deployed.

Latest figures from COPECO give the following statistics: four people have died; 4,393 people have been evacuated; 82 houses and eight bridges were destroyed, while 575 houses, six bridges and eleven roads were damaged.

The Vice-President of Honduras has asked the UN to provide short-term assistance to COPECO in disaster preparedness activities. COPECO will appoint a Regional Disaster manager for the departments of Cortés, Santa Barbara, Atlántida and Yoro.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

On 23 September a Declaration of Emergency was issued covering the communities within Tegucigalpa. The Honduran Red Cross (HRC), together with the police, army and fire brigade, are playing an important role in these evacuations.

The HRC, International Federation and the Participating National Societies (PNS) are reviewing the situation to identify further humanitarian assistance in the departments of Copan and Olancho, where over 2,300 persons have been evacuated and an unspecified number of people have been left stranded.

Needs

Contingency plans involving the HRC, Federation and PNS are active and at the present time the existing resources within these plans are sufficient to deal with the current demands. No Emergency Appeal is being contemplated at this time.

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