

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Guatemala: Tropical Depression Agatha

Information bulletin n° 1
GLIDE [TC-2010-000105-GTM](#)
30 May 2010

This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC), with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has determined that external assistance is not required, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

The first named tropical storm of the 2010 Pacific hurricane season – Agatha – caused severe rainfall in the departments of Escuintla, Suchitepéquez, Retalhuleu, San Marcos, Quetzaltenango, Huehuetenango, Totonicapán, Sololá, Chimaltenango and Guatemala. Guatemalan authorities report 12 deaths, 22 people missing and that 7,627 people have been affected to some degree by the storm and 4,975 people have been directly affected by the effects of the storm.



Villagers stand on a flooded street in Mixco May 29 2010. Tropical Storm Agatha slammed into Guatemala's Pacific coast near the Mexican border on Saturday, lashing the region with torrential rains. Agatha, the first named storm of the 2010 Pacific hurricane season, brewed up on Saturday morning and quickly raced inland. Source: REUTERS/Rodrigo Arias

The Guatemalan Red Cross has mobilized National Intervention Team members to the affected areas and is currently conducting damage and needs assessments. Therefore, more detailed information is expected during the following days.

[<click here to view the map of the affected area, or here for detailed contact information>](#)

The Situation

On 29 May, tropical depression 1-E became the first tropical storm – Agatha – of the 2010 Pacific hurricane season. The storm was located very close to the western coast of Guatemala approximately 150 kilometres south-west of the municipality of Ocos, in the San Marcos department. The Guatemalan Meteorological Institute (INSIVUMEH) reported that the tropical storm was moving slowly to the north-east of the country with winds that could reach up to 65 kilometres per hour.

The storm caused severe rainfall in the departments of Escuintla, Suchitepéquez, Retalhuleu, San Marcos, Quetzaltenango, Huehuetenango, Totonicapán, Sololá, Chimaltenango and Guatemala. More rainfall is

expected for these departments during the next week, possibly until Tuesday. Up to 29 May, the following cities reported high levels of precipitation as a result of Agatha:

| City | Millimetres of rain |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Huehuetenango | 38.0 |
| Guatemala Capital City | 42.0 |
| San José Port, Escuintla | 49.0 |
| Retalhuleu | 85.0 |
| Quetzaltenango | 64.0 |
| Ciudad Pedro de Alvarado | 24.0 |
| Tecun Umán, San Marcos | 18.0 |
| Champerico Port | 49.0 |

Source: INSIVUMEH

However, the tropical storm was downgraded to a tropical depression on Saturday night (29 May) as its winds decreased to 55 kilometres per hour (35 miles per hour). The U.S. National Hurricane Centre expected Agatha to dissipate further as it moved inland, but heavy rains have been reported on Sunday. The last record of rains similar to the quantities registered in the past days was in 1949.

During a press conference, the Guatemalan President informed that several houses have been destroyed due to landslides. Four members of one family died in Almolonga (Quetzaltenango department) and deaths were reported in other areas of the country. Moreover, the heavy rains have also caused traffic accidents in some areas of the country. The National Coordinating Body for Disaster Reduction (la Coordinadora Nacional para la Reducción de Desastres – CONRED¹) has reported the following figures in its latest situation report:

| People | Quantity | Infrastructural damages | Quantity |
|--|----------|-------------------------|----------|
| Deaths | 12 | Damaged houses | 3,509 |
| Missing persons | 22 | | |
| People that have been evacuated from their home | 61,424 | | |
| People affected to some degree by the storm | 7,627 | Affected bridges | 1 |
| People directly affected (damaged or destroyed house or crops) | 4,975 | | |

Information source: CONRED²

Other infrastructural damages reported include roads and bridges. Also, there have been disruptions in the water and electricity services. The Guatemalan La Aurora international airport is currently closed.

The National Coordinating Body for Disaster Reduction – CONRED jointly with INSIVUMEH are also monitoring river levels, as an increase has been registered particularly in the Michatoya, Paz, Sis, Ocosito, Ostua and Villalobos rivers, among others.

As a result of the emergency, the Guatemalan government has declared a state of national public calamity and states medical care, blankets, and food as the initial needs of the affected population. In addition, the CONRED has declared a red alert at national level. The national health authorities are mobilizing medical brigades, with the support of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

The United Nations system is participating in coordination meetings with the relevant Guatemalan authorities to provide support and coordinate response actions.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Guatemalan Red Cross has activated its Emergency Operations Centre to monitor the impact of the storm and coordinate response actions. Coordination is ongoing with the National Coordinating Body for Disaster Reduction – CONRED.

¹ <http://conred.gob.gt/>

² <http://conred.gob.gt/boletines/boletines-informativos/DCS-20100530-02-Boletin-Informativo-No-749.pdf>

The GRC branches in Cobán, Coatepeque, Quezaltenango, Retalhuleu, Mazatenango, Sacapulas, Tejutla, San Marcos and Petén are on orange alert, monitoring the areas affected by the rain and preparing all the available personnel for a possible intervention. For this emergency the National Society has National Intervention Team members with different specializations ready in their respective branches to carry out search, rescue and evacuations activities as well as damage and needs assessments, along with rescuers and the volunteer brigades (youth and women).

The Coatepeque GRC branch has started conducting search and rescue activities, damage and needs assessments and management of collective centres.

It is important to highlight that the National Society is responding to two emergencies at the same time: tropical depression Agatha and the volcanic eruption of the Pacaya volcano. In relation to the response to the volcanic eruption, the GRC is carrying out several actions. For example, in San Vicente Pacaya municipality of the department of Escuintla, seven NIT members specialized in water and sanitation were deployed to conduct rapid assessments in three collective centres - Municipal Hall (approx. 746 persons), Catholic Church (170 persons) and a nursery school (345 persons). The number of people in these centres is based on the initial census of the GRC, however an updated census is pending. The team is installing three water tanks, each with a capacity of 1,100 litres, in the Municipal Hall collective centre. In addition, in the nursery school collective centre the GRC is providing water through two water tanks which each have a capacity of 2,500 litres. Another tank is being installed in the Catholic Church collective centre with a capacity of 1,100 litres. All these actions are being coordinated with the Secretariat for Social Work of the President's Wife (Secretaría de Obras Sociales de la Esposa del Presidente - SOSEP) to organize the population in the use of water. Hygiene promotion activities including cleanliness of toilets, garbage classification and promotion of hand washing, are ongoing in these three centres

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) through its Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation for Central America and Mexico, are in constant communication with the National Society and Partner National Societies in-country (Netherlands Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross and Spanish Red Cross). Moreover, PADRU is monitoring the development of this meteorological event. Furthermore, a representative from PADRU will be deployed on Monday 31 May to Guatemala in order to support the emergency response operation.

The IFRC's Americas Zone Communications Unit has been in constant contact with the communicators of the Guatemalan Red Cross to provide additional support, as requested. A press release will be issued shortly. The Communications Unit has provided information to news agencies on the ongoing work of the Red Cross in relation this emergency.

The IFRC is ready to help communities in the Americas withstand the 2010 hurricane season through a careful integration of disaster response and disaster risk reduction activities, which translates into a more effective and efficient coordination of processes involved in relief operations.



People on a highway watch as a bridge is washed away by rain water after Tropical Storm Agatha in Barberena, Guatemala 30 May 2010. Source: REUTERS/Daniel LeClair

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by [Strategy 2020](#) which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

Contact information

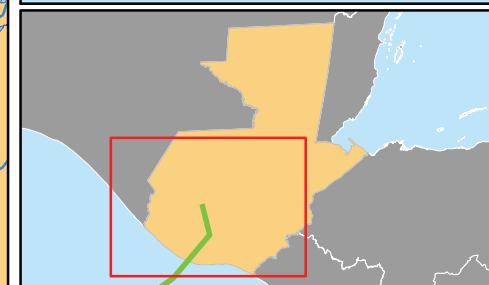
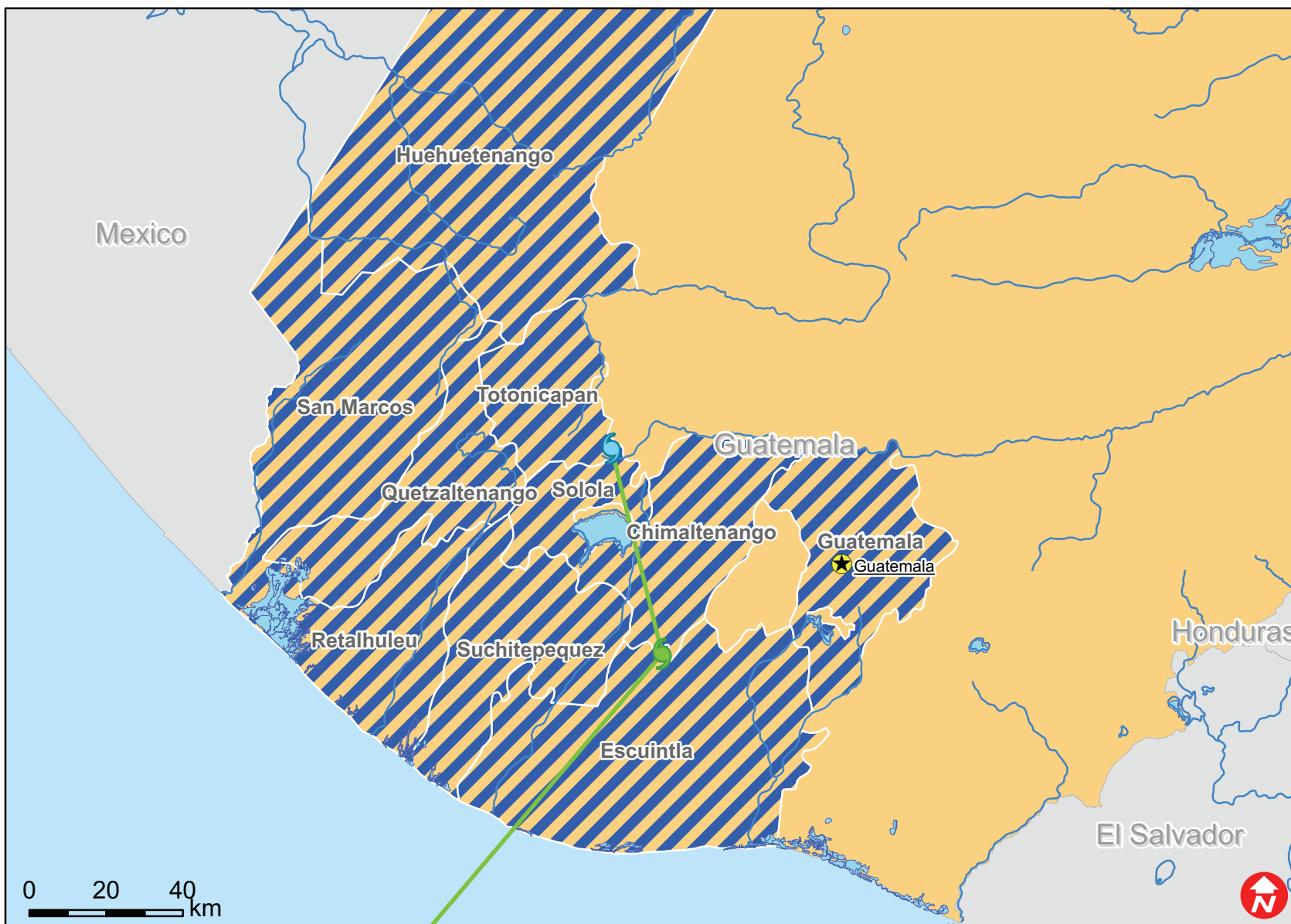
For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:




- In Guatemala: Teresa J. Marroqui, Responsible for the GRC's Disaster Response Office, phone: (502) 23816536; email: desastres@guatemala.cruzroja.org
- In Costa Rica: In Costa Rica: Fabricio Lopez, Regional Representative for Central America and Mexico, phone: (506) 526-4092; email: fabricio.lopez@ifrc.org
- In Panama: Francisco Maldonado; Acting Head of the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), phone: (507) 316 1001; fax: (507) 316 1082; email: francisco.maldonado@ifrc.org
- In Panama: Nelson Castaño, Disaster Risk Management Coordinator, phone: (507) 380-0250, email: nelson.castaño@ifrc.org
- In Geneva: Pablo Medina, Pablo Medina, Operations Coordinator; email: pablo.medina@ifrc.org; phone: (41) 79 2173376; fax: (41) 22 730 0395.

[<Map below; click here to return to the title page >](#)



Guatemala: Tropical depression Agatha



-  TROPICAL STORM
-  TROPICAL DEPRESSION
-  Affected districts