

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Central America: Tropical Depression Agatha

Information bulletin n° 2
GLIDE n° [TC-2010-000105-GTM](#)
[TC-2010-000105-SLV](#)
[TC-2010-000105-HND](#)
31 May 2010

This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The first named tropical storm of the 2010 Pacific hurricane season – Agatha – has caused severe rainfall in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

El Salvador: Heavy rains have been experienced in most of the country, specifically in the coastal areas, volcanic range and eastern and central areas of the country. The Directorate General of Civil Protection reports 9 deaths, 2 people missing, 3 injured, 8,147 evacuees and 5,012 people in collective centres. The Salvadoran Red Cross Society (SRCS) volunteers and staff are focusing on search and rescue, pre-hospital care and damage and needs assessments.



A handout photo shows flooding caused by Tropical Storm Agatha in Retalhuleu May 30 2010. Source: REUTERS/Casa Presidencial/Handout

Guatemala: Six regions have reported serious damages: Retalhuleu, Tecún Umán, Coatepeque, Mazatenango, Quetzaltenango and Santo Tomás. Official reports declare 82 deaths, 54 people missing, 21 injured, 150,124 evacuees and state that 85,512 people have been affected to some degree by the storm and 27,070 people have been directly affected by the effects of the storm.

The Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC) has mobilized National Intervention Team members to the affected areas and is currently focusing on search and rescue activities, evacuation, first aid and damage and needs assessments.

Honduras: Heavy rainfall through the western regions, Valle de Sula, Central and Southern regions of the country have caused flooding and landslides. Eleven departments and 30 municipalities have been affected. The Honduran Red Cross (HRC) reports 8 deaths, 9 missing people, 4 injured and 2,715 evacuees, while 2,454 people are currently in collective centres.

The National Societies have drafted plans of action. A preliminary emergency appeal will be launched shortly for Guatemala. Requests for DREF funding are currently being drawn up by the Salvadoran Red Cross Society and the Honduran Red Cross. In the three countries, damage and needs assessments are ongoing and the situation is evolving rapidly. Therefore, additional information is expected in the following days.

[<Click here to view the map of the affected areas; 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 close to the western coast of Guatemala, approximately 150 kilometres south-west of the municipality of Ocos, in the San Marcos department. Even though the tropical storm was downgraded to a tropical depression on Saturday night (29 May), the rains have affected several departments in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

El Salvador

Heavy rains have been experienced in most of the country, specifically in the coastal areas, volcanic range and eastern and central areas of the country. A state of red alert was issued by the Civil Protection on Saturday 29 May and then on Sunday 30 May the President issued a state of National Emergency. Collective centres have been activated in the departments of San Salvador, Sonsonate, Ahuachapán and La Libertad.

The Civil Protection has also informed that there have been 16 floods, 36 landslides and 5 collapsed infrastructures which have been reported. In addition, the Secretariat for Social Inclusion has mobilized five thousand food rations; distribution is taking place in the affected departments. Local authorities have identified the initial needs for the population in collective centres as drinking water, food, blankets, mattresses and hygiene items. Medical staff have been giving 24 hour attention to the people in the collective centres. Schools have been suspended since 20 are currently being used as collective centres and 5 schools experienced damages due to the heavy rains. There is evidence of increased incidence of diarrhoea, dengue and respiratory diseases over the last week.

The table below shows the current statistics relating to the effects of flooding.

People	Quantity
Injured	3
Missing	2
Dead	9
Evacuated	8,147
In Collective Centres	5,012
Collective Centres activated	87

Ministry of Governance-Directorate General of Civil Protection-30 May 2010

Infrastructure	Affected
Houses affected	8
Houses damaged	2
Bridges destroyed	2
Schools affected	0
Health establishments affected	15

Ministry of Governance-Directorate General of Civil Protection-30 May 2010

In addition, the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Urban Development has reported that numerous landslides have blocked roads. There is concern that the water supply in the capital could be affected if drainage systems are blocked. In addition, some 80 health establishments are at risk of being damaged and 15 have already sustained damages.

Coastal area flooding and overflowing of rivers have been reported. The rivers that drain into the Bálamo mountain range toward the La Libertad coast and which have a high probability of overflowing are the Melara, El Jute, Chilama, Aquiquisquillo, Bocana San Diego, Bocana Toluca and El Muerto. In addition, the Lempa River, Grande San Miguel River, Goascorán River, Jiboa and Paz Rivers are being monitored.

The table below shows rainfall levels in El Salvador.

City	Millimetres of rain
Santiago de María	93.7

Puerto Parada	89.1
El Pacayal	72.6

Guatemala: Tropical storm Agatha caused rainfall over the entire Guatemalan territory; however the Guatemalan government highlights Retalhuleu, Tecún Umán, Coatepeque, Mazatenango, Quezaltenango and Santo Tomás as the most affected departments. Although the tropical storm was downgraded to a tropical depression on Saturday night (29 May), more rainfall is expected for these departments during the next 48 hours, as forecasted by the Guatemalan Meteorological Institute (INSIVUMEH). INSIVUMEH reported that between 25 and 28 May the levels of precipitation in the country were between 200 and 359 mm. The last record of rainfall similar to these quantities was in 1949.

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	82	Houses severely damaged	2,076
Missing persons	54	Houses with moderate damages	6,188
Injured	21		
People at risk	21,868		
People in collective centres	34,082		
People that have been evacuated from their homes	150,124	Houses with few damages	1,475
People affected to some degree by the storm	85,512	Houses in high-risk areas	5,395
People directly affected (damaged or destroyed house or crops)	27,070	Affected bridges	1

Information source: CONRED

Other infrastructural damages reported include roads and bridges and there have been disruptions in the water and electricity services. Moreover, the heavy rains have also caused traffic accidents in some areas of the country. Major roads in the country such as the road Palin - Escuintla and Escuintla - Puerto San José remain blocked.

The Guatemalan La Aurora international airport will remain closed for international flights at least for the next three days due to the large quantity of ash from the Pacaya volcano eruption. Nonetheless, the airport is accepting incoming helicopter flights with humanitarian aid. All the international flights to Guatemala are being directed to the Colapma airport in El Salvador, while cleaning activities are ongoing in La Aurora. Access to Guatemala is still possible by land from Honduras and El Salvador.

CONRED jointly with INSIVUMEH is 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 extended the state of public emergency to a national level and described the situation as “very serious”. International assistance has been requested to help respond to the humanitarian needs of the affected population. The government has identified medical care, blankets and food as the initial needs of the affected population. The national health authorities have mobilized 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.

Honduras

On 29 May Honduras began to experience occasional heavy rainfall through western regions, Valle de Sula, Central and Southern regions of the country, causing people to evacuate their homes due to flooding and landslides. The Honduran cabinet declared a state of emergency on 30 May. Eleven departments: Cortes, Santa Bárbara, Yoro, Copan, Lempira, Ocotepeque, Comayagua, Choluteca, Francisco Morazán, Valle and Olancho have been affected including 30 municipalities. The table below shows the affected regions.

¹ <http://conred.gob.gt/>

Region	Area
Region One	Departments: Copán, Santa Bárbara, Comayagua, Cortés and an area of Yoro in the Valle de Sula
Region Four	Departments: El Paraíso, Francisco Morazán, Choluteca, Valle and La Paz
Region Five	Departments: Lenca, Intibuca, Lempira, part of La Paz, Ocotepeque and part of Comayagua

People	Quantity
Injured	4
Missing	9
Dead	8
Evacuated	2,715
In Collective Centres	2,454

Residents in the affected areas are being confronted with needs for food, medical and communication services. Educational services have also been suspended temporarily as a result of the situation.

Tegucigalpa

The Choluteca and Guacerique River along with the El Sapo streams overflowed in different areas of the city, obliging residents to evacuate to collective centres in the city. Electricity services were interrupted in Tegucigalpa and Comayaguela. In addition, the Civil Department of Aeronautics closed the Toncontín Airport due to poor visibility because of the heavy rainfall.

Southern Region

The Choluteca River affected 70 homes in Pespire community, while the Goascorán River is affecting communities on the Costa de los Amates in the mouth of the Pacific Ocean including hundreds who have been affected in Valle in the lower areas of Costa de los Amates.

Valle de Sula Region

Currently both the Ulúa and Chamelecón rivers are under observation.

North Eastern Region

Two bridges have been destroyed in the Catacámas and one bridge in Dulce Nombre de Culmí.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Salvadoran Red Cross Society

The Salvadoran Red Cross Society is currently responding to the emergency with 548 volunteers, and is carrying out damage and needs assessments. However, the situation is particularly complicated as the areas affected are those previously hit by tropical storm Ida. The SRCS is closely monitoring 45 flooded areas in coastal and urban areas as well as 139 areas where landslides have affected roads in the lowlands of the Bálsamo mountain range and the regions of the El Salvador volcano and Chinchontepec volcano in San Vicente. The SRCS has representatives coordinating with collective centres, emergency services, logistics and health services as well as the National Civil Protection System.

The SRCS volunteers involved are specialized in search and rescue, pre-hospital care and damage and needs assessment. Damage and needs assessment teams are continuing to be deployed in areas that are difficult to access in La Libertad where it is reported that more than 100 families are in collective centres in the communities of Chilamas, La Aguja, Conchalio, San Diego Bocana and San Diego Hacienda. There are also teams in La Paz, Usulután, Ahuachapán, Sonsonate and San Salvador. Furthermore, SRCS lifeguards are currently concentrated in the departments of San Salvador, on the banks of Ilopango Lake, La Libertad Port in La Paz and Usulután.

When the results of the damage and needs assessments are received, distribution activities will be put in place. Currently the SRCS has 3,000 blankets and 1,684 hygiene kits available.

The IFRC, through the Pan-American Disaster Response Unit and the Regional Representation for Central America and Mexico, is in constant communication with the SRCS regarding the emergency. The National Society is currently drawing up an application for DREF funding.

Guatemalan Red Cross

The GRC has activated its Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to monitor the impact of the storm and coordinate response actions. Coordination is ongoing with CONRED and government authorities and the National Society is participating in inter-institutional meetings at the national level. Moreover, the GRC branches located in the affected areas are activating the local EOCs as needed to coordinate actions at the local, municipal and departmental levels.

The GRC branches are focusing on the following services: search and rescue, evacuations, pre-hospital care, activation of collective centres, reestablishment of family links (RFL) and completion of damage and needs assessments. Branches currently working on relief activities include Tecún Umán, Retalhuleu, Mazatenango, Coatepeque, Quetzaltenango, Serchil, Tejutla, Sacapulas, Cobán, and Concepción Chiquirichapa.



GRC rescuers evacuated affected people from the high-risk areas.
Source: Guatemalan Red Cross

For this emergency the National Society has 99 National Intervention Team members with different specializations ready in their respective branches carrying out search, rescue and evacuation activities as well as damage and needs assessments.

Currently, the GRC is drafting a plan of action to provide humanitarian assistance to at least 3,000 affected families, focusing on: relief distribution, health in emergencies, water, sanitation and hygiene promotion, psychosocial support, food security, disaster preparedness and capacity building.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the IFRC and the in-country delegations of Partner National Societies (PNS) including the Netherlands Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross and Spanish Red Cross are coordinating their support and actions with the National Society based on the priority areas identified by the GRC.

It is important to highlight that the National Society is responding to two emergencies at the same time: tropical depression Agatha and the eruption of the Pacaya volcano. As a result of the GRC's plan of action for the volcano eruption, the National Society received logistic and financial support from the Norwegian Red Cross which will also be used to bolster efforts in response to tropical depression Agatha.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – through its Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation for Central America and Mexico – is in constant communication with the National Society, the ICRC and PNS in-country. Furthermore, a representative from PADRU will be arriving in Guatemala in order to support the emergency response operation.

Honduran Red Cross

The HRC branches are responding to the emergency through their volunteers. HRC volunteers are supporting search and rescue activities as well as the ongoing damage and needs assessments. The National Society has trained personnel including NITs and staff specialized in assessments, logistics and relief to support the ongoing activities. For example, a specialized water rescue team was deployed to the south zone of the country to support efforts in the San Lorenzo and Nacaome branches. Relief goods are also being sent to these areas including hygiene kits and blankets.

Based on previous lessons learnt, the National Society's vehicles were evacuated due their close proximity to the Choluteca Rive in case of flooding. Also, half of the blood reserve was mobilized to a safe location in the capital city to guarantee conservation and availability. Moreover, HRC volunteers in Tegucigalpa are conducting a census of the affected population living in the collective centres.

The National Society has drawn up a plan of action and is currently preparing an application for DREF funding. Priority needs are for blankets, food, cleaning and kitchen kits. It is estimated that there are at least 3,000 people that are in collective centres who have been directly affected by the tropical storm.

The International Federation, through its country programme coordinator based in Honduras is supporting the HRC. The PNS in-country – Canadian Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross and Swiss Red Cross – are also supporting the HRC at the headquarters and branch levels.

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. The Americas Zone Communications Unit has issued two press releases and made information available on the International Federation web pages (see links below). In addition, the communications unit continues to monitor and perform interviews with the media.

<http://www.cruzroja.org/notsemana/2010/compre/compre22may30.htm>

<http://www.ifrc.org/docs/news/pr10/3810.asp>

<http://www.cruzroja.org/padru/index.htm>

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. Marroquin, 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; or click here to return to the title page >](#)



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