

MEXICO: FLOODS

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The Disaster

The worst floods in 40 years have occurred in southern Mexico. Eleven days of torrential rains have seriously hampered national and local government authorities in bringing assistance to the victims in the states of Veracruz, Puebla, Chiapas, Michoacan, Tobasco, Jalisco, Hidalgo and Oaxaca where rivers have overflowed and mud slides have occurred. According to the Mexican government, the damages are incalculable and it has declared a state of natural disaster. The defence forces have opened temporary shelters, and are distributing food by land and air. There have been great losses of crops and livestock in all the states.

The floods in the state of Oaxaca have impeded the relief activities for the victims of the earthquake that occurred on 30 September where 27,000 houses, 1,299 schools, 100 churches, and 121 roads were damaged. Together with the floods, 40% of Oaxaca's territory is affected. In northern Puebla, a landslide has buried part of the community of Mixium and 60 people are feared dead. The community of Tenango de las Flores has been evacuated due to fears of a dam bursting. In Veracruz state, 33 persons are confirmed dead and 30,000 persons are affected, of which 17,000 are in shelters. Water levels of the rivers have risen by two meters. In Chiapas State, the Ministry of Health has put out an alert for fear of epidemics. Some 400 houses and farms are submerged and water levels in reservoirs are at record levels.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Difficult access to the areas affected has significantly impeded the relief efforts of the Mexican Red Cross rescue and first aid teams. Nevertheless, in cooperation with the defence forces, assistance is being delivered by means of helicopters. The Mexican Red Cross, in agreement with the government, is assisting in the evacuations, providing medical attention, helping to inform the public and coordinating the relief action of other voluntary agencies. A Federation delegate is assisting the Mexican Red Cross in the evaluation but difficulties in communications have slowed the flow of information.

Needs

The priority need now is for food and transport both in the form of all terrain vehicles and boats. Special rescue equipment is needed especially due to the high level of danger for the rescue workers. Besides food, communications equipment, blankets, clothing and hygiene kits are also needed. Neither the Government of Mexico nor the Mexican Red Cross has so far requested international assistance.

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