

# Operations update



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## MEXICO: FLOODS

Appeal N° MDRMX002  
GLIDE no. FL-2007-000200-MEX  
Operations Update n°1  
14 November 2007

### Period covered by this Operations Update:

6 November to 13 November 2007;

**Appeal target:** CHF 1,208,000 (USD 1,042,278 or EUR 722,056);

**Appeal coverage:** 98% [<click here to go directly to the updated donor response report, or here to link to contact details >](#)

### Appeal history:

- This Emergency Appeal was initially launched on a preliminary basis on 6 November 2007 for CHF 1,208,000 (USD 1,042,278 or EUR 722,056) for four months to assist 40,000 beneficiaries.
- **Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF):** CHF 200,000 (USD 173,563 or EUR 119,546) was initially allocated from the Federation's DREF to support the National Society's response.
- Due to bilateral contributions from the Swiss Red Cross, this Operations Update n°1 includes a new objective where 2,000 families will receive cleaning kits and 3,600 children school kits.



The city of Villahermosa in Tabasco is still flooded. **Source:** International Federation

**Summary:** Since the onset of the emergency in the states of Tabasco and Chiapas, the Mexican Red Cross (MRC) activated its national response system, coordinated with local authorities, provided information for the Federation's Disaster Management Information System (DMIS) and has been working arduously to provide relief aid to the affected population. The MRC headquarters in Mexico, F.D. dispatched a Rapid Intervention Unit (RIU) consisting of specialized personnel in disaster response, rescue equipment and vehicles. The National Rescue Director was deployed to Tabasco and led the operation with support from the Tabasco state delegate.

Some 6,000 volunteers have participated in the emergency operation by carrying out among other things search and rescue activities and receiving and dispatching relief items. In addition, some 100 volunteers are carrying out needs and damage assessments. Once these are done, the needs of the affected population will be more clearly established and the distributions can begin.

International response has been positive; many organizations such as UN agencies have deployed specialized teams to assist with the relief activities, assessments and coordination activities. The MRC is coordinating with such international agencies as well as with local and national agencies and authorities. The International Federation is providing support to the MRC through the Regional Representation Office in Central America and

Mexico as well as through the Pan American Disaster Response Unit.

## The situation

### Tabasco

A week of torrential rains brought on by two cold fronts and by the effects of Tropical Storm Noel has caused severe flooding in the state of Tabasco since 28 October. Over 700 mm of rainfall have caused levees to exceed their capacity as well as the overflowing of the Carrizal and Mazcalpa rivers. The floods have affected the entire state of Tabasco (estimated total population 1,989,969); Villahermosa, the capital city of Tabasco, was deeply affected because of the overflowing Grijalva River (especially the central part of the city). The Emergency Operative Committee (Comité Operativo de Emergencia – COE) from the state of Tabasco was activated on 27 October.

Reportedly, one million people were affected, and agricultural crops and livestock were completely destroyed. 16 of the 17 municipalities in Tabasco have sustained damages, which translates to some 1,063 towns in the state. 1,020 shelters have been opened, currently housing 123,634 people. Out of the 5,311 schools in the state, 2,954 are flooded; but 390 of these can and are being used as shelters. The Mexican army is in charge of all shelter operations and is conducting a census.



Situation in Villahermosa on 12 November 2007: Water is receding slowly. *Source:* International Federation

11 days after the state of emergency was declared, over 50 percent of Villahermosa is still under water as reported by the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC). However, drainage systems and pumps are working and access is improving in different areas. Water levels have receded in the following quarters: González 1st and 2nd sections, Anacleto Canabal 1st and 2nd sections, Lázaro Cárdenas, 1st and 2nd sections, Plátano y Cacao 1st section and Villa Parrilla y Miguel Hidalgo. The National Water Commission (Comisión Nacional del Agua – Conagua) declared that 57 water pumping stations are extracting 66,310 liters per second in Villahermosa. The water is subsequently directed to the rivers Grijalva and Carrizal.

United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team reports that most rural communities in the lower areas of Chiapas and in all of Tabasco are no longer isolated and water levels are slowly receding. Some 10 to 20 percent of each municipality in some rural communities is still flooded and some of these remain isolated.

The Health Secretariat committed to initiate extensive fumigation to prevent illnesses such as dengue and yellow fever. The situation is under control; however, the health alert will be enforced for another two to three months depending on the rate at which the waters recede. Health facilities estimated sustained damages at more than USD 45 million. According to the Secretary of Health, the most urgently needed items are three animal incinerators to prevent the spread of diseases. A difficult challenge is that people do not want to leave their homes despite not having proper living and sanitation conditions. Education authorities report over 1,200 seriously affected schools in Tabasco. The Ministry of Education highlighted that students in Tabasco will not lose their

academic term. Notwithstanding the delay in school reconstruction, some primary school lectures have already taken place in shelters.

### Chiapas

Eight persons were reported dead due to the mudslide that covered the community of Juan de Grijalva in the municipality of Ostuacán. The search for 21 missing people is still ongoing and 50 houses were affected. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reports severe damages due to landslides and overflowing rivers in certain communities. Most of these communities are isolated and have been receiving humanitarian assistance through helicopters. According to state authorities, 31 municipalities are affected and 2,928 people are living in 30 temporary shelters. Damage assessments cannot yet be undertaken in light of the flooding. In the municipality of Berriozábal, some 238 families from 20 communities are still in shelters but demand to be relocated given the risk of potential landslides. Some 120 families refuse to leave their homes in the mountains. The Army and the Civil Protection agency are providing them with humanitarian assistance while encouraging them to leave. In the northern region of Chiapas, particularly in the municipalities of Huitupan, Simojovel and El Bosque, UNDP reports that in ten assessed communities, 1,587 families require humanitarian assistance - mainly food for three days. Damage can be observed in houses, freeways, water infrastructure and electricity in 129 communities from 34 municipalities, particularly in Juárez, Pichucalco, Sabanilla, Ostuacán and Huitupán. Two schools and one hospital were completely destroyed.

Through this emergency appeal, the Federation strives to assist the MRC in providing 8,000 affected families (some 40,000 people) with relief items. Due to ongoing assessments at the time of writing, more information will be available in due course.

Government response includes the deployment of 8,000 soldiers, 3,000 marines and over 2,000 policemen to the affected areas. In addition, trucks for relief distributions were provided. Priority was given to search and rescue activities, supplemented in some cases by helicopters dropping relief goods to isolated people. While the current airlift capacity is appropriate, helicopters have been making an average of four to five missions per day. The Federal Government has issued a large list of immediate needs to the international community (health, food, water and sanitation) and has welcomed international assistance, which has been offered by several international organizations and agencies. These needs are being revised, considering that flood victims of both states account for around one million people and will require food and other kind of assistance for at least another month. Mexico's President announced a USD 650 million federal fund for reconstruction as well an extension for tax payments for residents and businesses until June 2008. Official institutions have encouraged the private sector and the civil society to assist, since available provisions are being depleted rapidly. Authorities have been in contact with the private sector and several foundations to obtain such needed help.

## Coordination and partnerships

### Movement coordination:

The Federation is supporting the MRC through the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), and through the Regional Representation Office for Central America and Mexico in Panama. PADRU has sent a first plane with non food relief items and a second shipment of goods is projected to take place within the next few days. PADRU has also been supporting the MRC in coordination meetings held with national and local authorities and international relief organizations. Currently, a Disaster Management (DM) officer is in Mexico, supporting relief activities. In addition, PADRU will launch a Regional Intervention Team (RIT) alert in order to dispatch a person with procurement expertise. The selected RIT member will work with the procurement department and the Disaster Management office in Mexico City.



**People waiting to receive their food parcels.**  
*Source: International Federation*

The MRC has mobilized approximately 3,000 tons of humanitarian aid, consisting mainly of food and water (30 percent of aid received has been bottled water): more than 200,000 relief packages have been delivered to the most affected people. The MRC in coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) created a web site: [www.familylinks.icrc.org](http://www.familylinks.icrc.org) in order to reunite those affected with their families. Ten volunteers in shelters are working on this specific activity, performing duties like gathering data from the victims in the shelters. This link has so far received 50,000 registers of affected people. The MRC has also established an emergency phone line (01 55 1084-4534) where people in and outside of Mexico can call to obtain information.

A total of 6,000 volunteers participated in the operation carrying out several activities: receiving and dispatching relief supplies, packaging, transportation and distribution of relief items, providing first aid care and establishing family links. In addition, volunteers are carrying out damage and needs assessments, although these cannot be undertaken in all of the affected areas due to the flood waters. In Tabasco, some 650 volunteers are currently providing emergency relief aid. The MRC has dispatched volunteers from 14 local branches to Tabasco to support the operation.

The Swiss Red Cross is planning to expand the second objective included in this appeal. This part, in addition to the contribution already made to the appeal, will be accomplished bilaterally with the MRC following the plan of action designed by the National Society for this operation. The Swiss Red Cross will mobilize an emergency expert from Honduras for a period of one month to provide assistance to the MRC in logistic procedures needed in this operation.

The Spanish Agency for International Aid (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional – AECI) through the Spanish Red Cross has donated two water treatment plants to the MRC. This equipment is part of the MRC program for equipment replenishment. The MRC can utilize these plants as they deem necessary and either for the current emergency or for future emergency operations.

#### **External coordination:**

The MRC along with the International Federation has coordinated emergency response activities directly with representatives from the European Commission, Doctors without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres – MSF), UNDAC team and all agencies pertaining to the United Nations system. Several meetings have been held in order to share information, establish frameworks for activities in the emergency and avoid duplication of efforts.

To date, a regional delegate from the Swiss Red Cross and a commission from the American Red Cross led by the president and vice president of this National Society have been present in the field since the beginning of the emergency. The MRC is participating actively in the command centre where all the information is received and reports of the emergency are issued. The command centre is located in the Finance Secretariat with more than 40 representatives participating, among them the Red Cross, but also government, military, civilian, and non governmental organizations.

The UNDAC team has elaborated a meeting schedule with every international organization present in the field in order to coordinate all relief and recovery activities. On 10 November, a first meeting was held between the International Federation, MSF, Project Concert, PSI, Asociación Gilberto, OFDA, OXFAM, World Vision, Caritas, WFP and the UN Environment Programme. The meeting was led by the State Secretary and by the UNDAC team. Government agencies supporting the emergency also participated in this meeting.

The following issues were discussed during the meeting:

- Contributions made and future contributions to the operation
- Proposals received by several organizations
- Delivery of humanitarian aid and counterpart within other organizations
- Targets planned by each agency
- The need of field evaluations to clarify the situation
- Simple procedures for the collection of relief supplies
- Logistic needs
- Security issues

The second meeting was held Monday, 12 November. A database with a list of all the organizations working in the emergency has been established. This is expected to function as the centre of inter-agency information sharing in order to facilitate decision making.

UN agencies present in the field are:

- The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA);
- The Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery from the United Nations Development Programme (BCPR/UNDP);
- The World Food Programme (WFP);
- The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF);
- The Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO);
- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA);
- United Nations Coordination Team (UNCT) (currently preparing a Flash Appeal and a CERF request).

The Mexican military has installed eight community kitchens in Tabasco. Each kitchen can produce food for 3,000 people per day. The majority of the food that is processed in these community kitchens is supplied by the MRC. Authorities plan to install three more kitchens in the upcoming days; one of them will be in the community of Gaviota in Villahermosa which was deeply affected.

On 10 November, six organizations including the MRC, started damage and needs assessments and an official

needs analysis. Some 100 volunteers will be supporting this activity and concrete results are expected to be completed shortly. On 11 November, the MRC started their major distribution activities; each community will receive food and water to last for up to 15 days.



**Relief aid arrives to the state of Chiapas in Mexico.**

**Source: International Federation**

The Italian government responded to this emergency appeal by contributing EUR 50,000 to the Federation's Appeal, arranged through its General Directorate for Development Cooperation. This contribution will lead to enabling the MRC to accomplish the objective set out.

The MRC maintains strategic alliances which have facilitated the overall process of the operation. The Walmart Foundation has donated food parcels and logistic services. The Bancomer Foundation has also donated food parcels as well as other local companies and people have donated resources like trucks, personnel and boats. These resources have supported the MRC in the entire emergency operation.

Also, diplomatic representations of Mexico worldwide are opening bank accounts to provide support to Tabasco and Chiapas with 53 banks accounts already created.

### **National Society Capacity Building**

The MRC has a long history of responding to disasters and has developed a strong capacity. They will be better prepared to respond to this and future emergencies through the further development of existing management and response structures. Mexico has been affected by four hurricanes so far this year - Dean, Felix, Henriette, and Lorenzo - as well as by several tropical depressions, all of which have been efficiently managed by the National Society. At the onset of this emergency the MRC was well prepared with pre-positioned stocks in their local branches in Tabasco and Chiapas ready to be distributed to the affected population. Although the MRC plan of action is focused in immediate emergency relief, this appeal will enable the procurement of items to replenish MRC relief stocks, therefore strengthening and re-establishing their response capacity for future relief operations.

## Red Cross action

### Overview

The MRC is working arduously to meet the basic needs of the affected population and is distributing initial food and water items, carrying out search and rescue activities and coordinating relief activities and distributions with local, national and international authorities and organizations. However, the operation is facing some delays in the distribution of relief items, as damage and needs assessments are still ongoing and the water levels are receding quite slowly: a complete overview of the needs is lacking to date. However; a first plane with relief items has been sent by the Federation's PADRU and a second shipment is expect in the next days. The sent items are ready to be distributed as soon as it is possible.

### Progress towards objectives

#### Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

**Objective: Objective 1: 8,000 families (40,000 beneficiaries) affected by the current flooding who have not yet been assisted will receive the needed relief items. Procurement will also replenish MRC relief stocks, therefore strengthening and re-establishing their response capacity for future relief operations.**

#### Progress:

PADRU in coordination with the Regional Logistics Unit (RLU) in Panama deployed the first plane to Villahermosa enclosing non-food items, consisting of 1,300 hygiene kits, 2,640 jerry cans (10 liters), 1,300 kitchen kits, 2,600 impregnated mosquito nets and 1,300 plastic buckets. This cargo was received by the MRC and the IFRC and is being kept in the MRC warehouse in Villahermosa. Of the 8,000 beneficiary families of this appeal, 1,300 will benefit from this first shipment of relief goods. These goods will be distributed once the first distribution of food and water is completed. PADRU's future cargos will be made by ship.

The RLU in Panama is currently working on the second shipment of relief goods to be sent to Mexico. These goods are foreseen to be deployed on the weekend of 16 November.

#### Impact:

Distributions of the relief items have not yet taken place.

#### Challenges:

The distributions in Mexico have not taken place due to the following reason: the official needs and damage assessments performed by 100 MRC volunteers started on 10 November and will probably be completed in a week. Once these assessments are accomplished, it will be easier to identify the more specific needs and to establish the distribution points. Once the water recedes and people can move back to their homes, the supplies will be ready for distribution.

Since Villahermosa's airport does not have the capacity to receive heavy airplanes, the quantity of goods (20 tons) sent by PADRU will benefit only 1,300 families out of the 8,000 families this appeal seeks to assist. In the future, goods will be sent by ship.

Although the draining of flood waters has begun, the water is receding slowly, which delays the distribution of relief supplies. Cleaning activities have not yet begun since the food and water distribution activities have not yet been completed.

Objective 2: 2,000 families will receive cleaning kits and 3,600 children will receive school kits in order to initiate their schooling in the state of Tabasco.

This objective will be covered bilaterally with the support of the Swiss Red Cross and the items will be procured locally following the Federations procurement standards. The Mexican Red Cross is negotiating with a national donor to supply the school bag to contain and accompany the school kits.

The cleaning kits will contain the following items:

- 1 plastic broom
- 1 trash collector
- 1 squeegee
- 1 cleaning cloth for mops
- 1 plastic bucket (10 liters)
- 1 gallon of Clorox
- 1 gallon of disinfectant
- 1 detergent bag (2 kg.)
- 1 pair of plastic gloves

The school kits will contain the following items:

- 1 notepad (letter size)
- 2 notebooks
- 1 crayon box
- 2 colored pencils
- 2 pens
- 1 pencil sharpener
- 1 glue jar
- 1 glue stick
- 1 plastic ruler (30 centimeter)

### **Communications – Advocacy and Public Information**

Maintaining a steady flow of timely and accurate information between the field and other major stakeholders is vital for fundraising, advocacy and maintaining the profile of emergency operations. During an operation, communications between affected populations and the Red Cross and Red Crescent, as well as with the media and donors, is an essential mechanism for effective disaster response and the cornerstone to promote greater quality, accountability, and transparency. There has been close coordination and support to the Mexican Red Cross to increase the visibility of their actions in regards to the communication through the Federation's PADRU, the Central America and Mexico Regional Representation Office and the Federation's Communications Department in Geneva. Furthermore, the communication activities targets five main target audiences: the media, the Red Cross Movement, beneficiaries, local authorities and donors.

To date, six DMIS reports have been published about this emergency. Relevant information for this emergency can be found in the following MRC web sites: <http://www.cruzrojamexicana.org.mx/>, [www.cruzroja.org](http://www.cruzroja.org) and [www.ifrc.cruzroja.org](http://www.ifrc.cruzroja.org). Information can also be found on the website of the Federation: [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org). A press release and several stories from the field have been published about this emergency. A photo gallery with all photographs showing the MRC response to this emergency is being designed. The Red Cross and the International Federation have dispatched two information officers to the state of Tabasco which have facilitated information to the organization and to the public in coordination with the Media Services in Geneva, the Regional Representation office in Panama, counterparts from communication departments of the MRC and PADRU. The media in the United States started campaigns in order to recollect funds for the people affected. These proceeds will be bound for to the American Red Cross so they can transfer it directly to the MRC. More than 100 radio and television interviews were offered in one week in the state of Tabasco. Interviews have been granted to local, national, regional and international media in English and Spanish. Although international media is quieting down, the communication team is increasing its efforts to maintain informing the development of the emergency operation to the local and international media.

The Federation is working with the MRC to assist the most vulnerable. Activities to be carried out in the planned operation are based upon the principle of humanity. Beneficiary selection is based on the level of vulnerability of those affected, respecting culture diversity and ensuring gender sensitivity. Activities planned for this appeal are based on SPHERE project, humanitarian charter and the code of conduct for emergency response.

## 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 is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.***

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

### Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

## Contact information

**For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:**

- In Mexico: Isaac Oxenhaut Guzco, Relief Director, Mexican Red Cross, phone (52)55 36 27 08 94; e-mail: [desastres@cruzrojamexicana.org.mx](mailto:desastres@cruzrojamexicana.org.mx)
- In Panama: Stephen McAndrew, Head of PADRU; phone (507) 316 1001; Fax (507) 316 1082; e-mail: [Stephen.Mcandrew@ifrc.org](mailto:Stephen.Mcandrew@ifrc.org).
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**[<Updated donor response report attached below; click here to return to the title page>](#)**

# International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Donor response to MDRMX002 - MEXICO - FLOODS

TIMEFRAME: 02 Nov 07 to 06 Mar 08

LOCATION: Mexico

TOTAL AMOUNT SOUGHT:	1,208,000
TOTAL RECEIVED TO DATE:	1,188,702
APPEAL COVERAGE TO DATE:	98%

Updated on: 14 Nov 2007

	Currency	Amount	Coordination & Implementation	Disaster Management	Health & Care	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Total
			CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF	CHF
<b>BUDGET</b>								<b>1,208,000</b>
<b>FUNDING</b>								
<b>Opening Balance</b>				<b>200,000</b>				<b>200,000</b>
<b>Income</b>								
<b>Cash contributions (received and pledged)</b>								
American Red Cross	USD	167,077		193,642				<b>193,642</b>
Canadian Red Cross	CAD	100,000		121,500				<b>121,500</b>
Canadian Red Cross (from Canadian Government)	CAD	100,000		121,500				<b>121,500</b>
Liechtenstein Red Cross	CHF	20,000		20,000				<b>20,000</b>
New Zealand Red Cross (from New Zealand Government)	NZD	50,000		44,350				<b>44,350</b>
<b>Total Cash contributions</b>				<b>500,992</b>				<b>500,992</b>
<b>Inkind Goods &amp; Transport (pledged)</b>								
American Red Cross	USD	46,715		54,703				<b>54,703</b>
Mexican Red Cross	CHF	433,007		433,007				<b>433,007</b>
<b>Total Inkind Goods &amp; Transport</b>				<b>487,710</b>				<b>487,710</b>
<b>Total Income</b>				<b>988,702</b>				<b>988,702</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>1,188,702</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,188,702</b>
<b>COVERAGE</b>								<b>98%</b>