

OPERATIONS UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

CENTRAL AMERICA, MEXICO AND HAITI: FLOODS FROM HURRICANE STAN – SPECIAL FOCUS ON GUATEMALA

9 October 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

Appeal No. 05EA021 Operations Update no. 1 Period covered: 7 – 9 October 2005; Appeal coverage; *the contributions list is currently being compiled and will be attached to the next operations update.*

Appeal history:

- Launched on 7 October 2005 for CHF 1,568,000 (USD 1,230,694 or EUR 1,012,648) for 6 months to assist 10,250 families (some 51,250 beneficiaries).
- Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 250,000 (USD 196,188 or EUR 161,463)
- A separate Appeal seeking CHF 487,000 for 4,200 families (21,000 beneficiaries) for floods and volcanic activity in El Salvador was launched on 6 October.

Outstanding needs:

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals: El Salvador: Floods and Volcanic Activity; Appeal 05EA020; Central America: Annual Appeal: 05AA043; Haiti: Floods; Appeal 22/2004

Operational Summary: *Of Guatemala's 23 departments, 12 are in a State of Emergency, as declared by the President of the Republic. To date, Some 32,000 people have been evacuated and are accommodated in temporary shelters. Communications have been interrupted, as roads are blocked, telephone lines are down and some 85 bridges have collapsed. 50 volunteers from the Guatemala City branch of the Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC) who form part of the immediate response corps, have been working since the onset of the disaster in the coastal areas of the department of Escuintla, providing medical assistance and carrying out search and rescue. Another 150 Red Cross volunteers are on the ground, working to reach those affected and to provide aid as quickly as possible. The Federation has deployed a five member Field Assessment and Coordination (FACT) team which will work with the GRC to determine the scale of the disaster and to further identify the needs of the population hit by the disaster. Today, 9 October, a flight with relief goods has been sent to Guatemala from the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU). Funding is urgently needed to assist those hit by devastating floods and landslides, most of who were already living in precarious conditions, reliant on subsistence crops which have either been washed away or damaged by the on-going rains.*

Further information on the relief operations in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico and Haiti, as well as El Salvador, will be published in regular operations updates.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- *In Guatemala: Teresa Marroquín, Disaster Management Director, Guatemalan Red Cross, Guatemala City; email teresamarroquin@guatemala.cruzroja.org, phone (502) 2253-2027, fax (502) 2232-4649*

- *In Costa Rica: Costa Rican National Society, San José; email prevdesastres@cruzroja.or.cr; phone (506)233-7033; fax (506) 233-7628*
- *In Honduras: Honduran Red Cross, Tegucigalpa; email honducruz@datum.hn, phone (504) 237-8876, fax (504) 238- 0185*
- *In Nicaragua: Nicaraguan Red Cross, Alejandro Morales, Relief Director; email crnsocorros@humanidad.org.ni, phone(505) 265-2087, fax (505) 885-3880*
- *In Mexico: Commandante Isaac Oxenhaut, Relief Director, phone (5255) 1084 4510; fax (5255) 1084 4514; e-mail dirgral@cruzrojamexicana.org*
- *In Haiti: Mme Michaèle Amédée Gédéon, President; phone (509) 510 9813; fax (509) 223 1054, e-mail croroaha@haitiworld.com*
- *In Panama: Nelson Castaño, Head of the Pan American Disaster Response Unit; email nelson.castano@ifrc.org; phone (507) 316-1001; fax (507) 316-1082*
- *In Geneva: Luis Luna, Federation Regional Officer, Americas Department, Geneva; email luis.luna@ifrc.org; phone 41.22.730.24.74; fax 41.22.733.03.95*

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

Background

Hurricane Stan, the 18th named storm of the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season, first formed as a tropical depression off the east coast of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula. The storm quickly strengthened to a tropical storm, bringing heavy rains to Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and south eastern Mexico. As the storm moved back over the Gulf of Mexico, it strengthened to a category one hurricane just before coming ashore in the Mexican state of Veracruz. The storm system also brought heavy rains to Haiti, specifically in the communities of Artbonite, and to northern Belize. The death toll in the region currently stands at 617, but that number is expected to rise.

Costa Rica

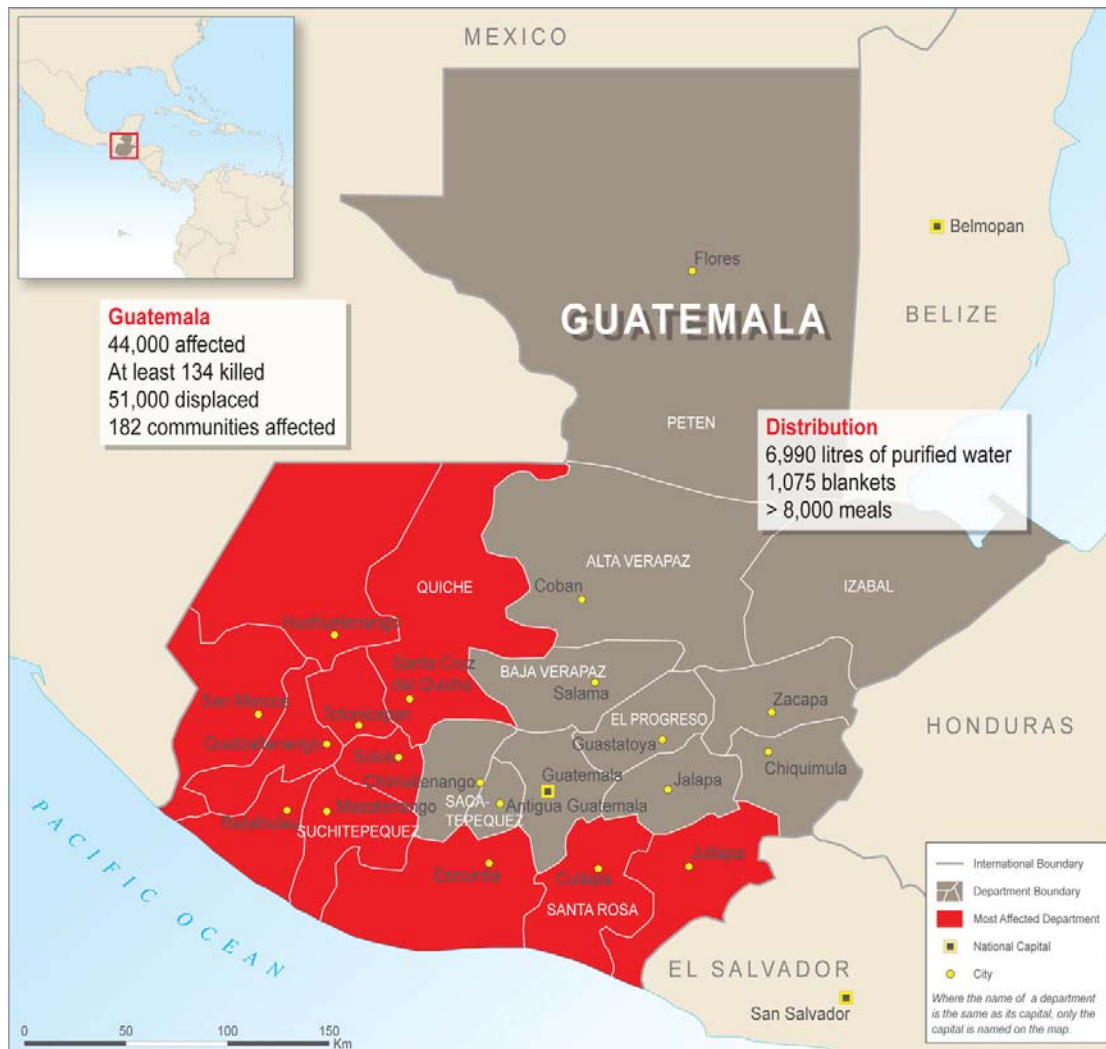
Since Monday, 19 September, heavy rains in Costa Rica have caused flooding of major rivers and landslides. Some 2,000 people have now been affected in the following cantons of the *Provinces of San José*: Vásquez de Coronado, Dota, Tarrazú, León Cortés, Acosta, Tibás and Pérez Zeledón; *Puntarenas*: Osa, Aguirre, Parrita, Garabito, Buenos Aires, Gófito, Esparza and Puntarenas; *Alajuela*: San Carlos, Upala, Alajuela and Valverde Vega; *Guanacaste*: Nandayure, Hojancha, Nicoya, Santa Cruz, Abangares, Bagaces and Carrillo; *Cartago*: Turrialba and *Heredia*: Heredia and Sarapiquí. At least one death has been attributed to the floods. As a result, over 1,500 people have been obliged to evacuate their homes and are currently accommodated in 24 shelters or in the houses of family and neighbours. To date, 398 houses have been reported as damaged by the rains, water and electricity supply has been affected in some areas, 48 bridges, 4 dikes and 28 sewerage systems have been damaged, over 100 roads have been waterlogged and there has been damage to crops. The area of Quepos in the Province of Puntarenas has been particularly badly hit by the flooding. On Tuesday, 27 September, the Costa Rican president, Abel Pacheco, declared a state of emergency and the National Emergency Commission issued a red alert on 5 October in several cantons of the Province of Guanacaste in the north.

Guatemala

Three straight days of rains brought on by Hurricane Stan have caused flooding and landslides in Guatemala, seriously affecting almost 100,000 people in the departments of Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Quetzaltenango, Sololá, Retalhuleu, Suchitepéquez, Escuintla, Santa Rosa, Sacatepéquez, Jalapa, Jutiapa, Totonicapán and Quiché. To date, there are 508 confirmed deaths, although that number is expected to at least double as there are reports of entire villages being buried under landslides. Efforts to determine the number of dead and missing have been hindered by rain as floods and landslides have wiped out roads, making it difficult for rescue teams to reach

the affected areas. According to the Guatemalan Red Cross, 5,118 houses have been damaged and some 84,949 people are being housed in 255 emergency shelters. Volunteer fire-fighters have evacuated more than 6 thousand residents in the departments of San Marcos, Jalapa, Sololá, Santa Rosa, Huehuetenango, Jutiapa, Sacatepéquez, Escuintla and Retalhuleu. Crops of sugar cane in the coastal areas and maize and beans in the Altiplano have been wiped out or damaged, putting livelihoods at risk.

The Mayan villages of Panabaj and Tzanchaj, on the shores of Lake Atitlan, an area popular with Western tourists, have been particularly hard hit. The area was buried in massive mudslides, as tonnes of mud poured down the sides of the mountains surrounding the lake. There are currently 71 confirmed deaths in the area, but officials fear that number could rise as high as 1,400 as there is little hope of finding survivors. The area may be declared a mass grave because of a Guatemalan law that puts a 72 hour limit on finding the dead for health reasons. Between 80 and 140 mm of rain are being reported each day; the normal amount of rainfall is between 10 and 30 mm. More than 200 landslides have been reported through the country's road network, blocking access to many communities. According to Guatemalan authorities, at least 90 villages remain cut off. Most of the affected communities are located in the southern Pacific coast region of the country.



Honduras

In Honduras the passage of the depression related to the formation of tropical storm/Hurricane Stan has been causing constant, heavy rainfall since Thursday, 28 September, affecting 2,869 people and causing 6 deaths. There are currently some 700 people staying in 9 shelters that have been set up in the affected areas. The Ulúa River in the Sula valley in the north of the country has swollen, flooding several communities in Potrerillos and San Manuel, affecting hundreds of hectares of crops of beans, maize and sorghum. In the south of the country, several communities have been seriously affected by the flooding which has damaged both homes and crops. In the department of Lempira, a mud slide has obliged 40 families to evacuate their homes and in the centre of the country, the capital city has been affected with 15 landslides occurring on major roads, whilst in the East of the country over 100 families have been evacuated as a preventive measure. In addition, a number of major roads are blocked by landslides. It is estimated that damage to crops is now affecting over 4,000 families. The government has declared a red alert which is currently in force for the south of the country.

Nicaragua

Nicaraguan authorities have confirmed that nine people have died in the country as a result of the heavy rains, six of which were killed when their boat capsized in the Gulf of Fonseca, on the Pacific side of the country. It is suspected that they were migrants travelling to the United States. Some 1,213 people have been affected and 700 are staying in 9 shelters that have been set up in the affected areas. At least 13 homes have been damaged.

The National Disaster Operations Centre (CODE), which is part of the National Disaster Response System (SINAPRED), has reported that the western region of the country has been the most seriously affected by the floods. The Municipal Committee for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response (COMUPRED) in El Viejo, Chinandega, has evacuated 75 people from the community of Los Cheros which was at risk of flooding from the Acome River. The early alert system in Chinandega has registered 219 mm of rainfall in the area. In the area of Tipitapa, 204 people have been affected by floods, 33 houses have been flooded and one house has been destroyed. The local COMUPRED is providing assistance to affected persons. The COMUPRED in Granada has reported rising water levels in the Malacatoya River and the Special Operations Commission is carrying out a damage and needs assessment in the area to determine the number of people and communities affected.

Mexico

Hurricane Stan made landfall in Mexico as a category one storm and was quickly downgraded to a tropical storm as it moved over land. However, the storm system brought with it strong winds of up to 130 km/h and heavy rains. The most affected states in Mexico are Veracruz, Tabasco, Oaxaca and Chiapas. According to the Mexican Red Cross, some 65,000 people have been affected, and 70 shelters have been set up to accommodate the 12,000 displaced persons in the country. Throughout Mexico, at least 6,000 houses have been affected, of which some 2,200 have been completely destroyed. In addition 945 kilometres of roads have been damaged, as well as 34 bridges. Given the levels of flooding, there are also health concerns in the affected area and medical brigades are being sent to the area.

Red alerts have been issued in Veracruz and Tabasco. In Veracruz, 15 thousand residents have been evacuated. Houses in at least 20 municipalities have been flooded and another 20 towns have been cut off. In Tabasco, some 500 thousand people have been affected by the rains, although the Mexican Civil Protection Agency reports that the situation in that state has stabilized. In Oaxaca, authorities have reported that heavy rains thousands of residents out of their homes near the town of Ostuta as the nearby river flooded its banks. Civil Protection officials in Chiapas report that at least 18 municipalities and 110 communities have been severely damaged by the rains, affecting more than 40 thousand people. Some 251 schools have been damaged and at least 200 houses have been destroyed. Authorities in Chiapas have set up 97 temporary shelters which are housing 13,000 people. Authorities are providing shelter residents with water, food, mattresses and blankets.

	El Salvador Stan (COEN)	Haiti (CRH)	México (CRM)	Guatemala (CRG)	Honduras (COPECO)	Nicaragua (SINAPRED)	Costa Rica (CRRC and OPS CNE)
Affected persons	62,467	2,000*	65,000*	97,874	2,869	1,213	2,000
Deaths	67			508	6	3	1
Injured persons				94			
Displaced persons			12,000		317		
Persons in shelters	62,467			84,949	317	700	
Shelters	534		70	255		9	24
Houses damaged				5,118	768	13	

Haiti

Floods have occurred in the commune of Grande Saline in the Department of Artibonite in the north of the country as a result of the rivers in the area having burst their banks: the villages of Aquin, Lubin, Poirier and Lagrange were flooded on the night of Tuesday 4 October. One person died and around 2,000 families have been seriously affected. A number of houses and heads of cattle were swept away by the waters.

A Haitian National Red Cross Society team led by the head of the Disaster Management Department has been to the affected area and took part in a meeting of the crisis cell held in Gonaives. Five volunteers from the Saint Marc branch have been mobilized to the field; however, access is possible only by boat. It is difficult to assess the damage, however, according to preliminary information, there are needs for hygiene kits, kitchen sets, water purification tablets and mosquito nets.

Red Crescent action - objectives, progress, impact

The rain continues to fall in Guatemala and has been forecast to last throughout the weekend. Given the gravity of the situation and the numbers of people seriously affected, the Federation has mobilized a five-member Field Assessment and Coordination (FACT) team. In addition, a second disaster management delegate from the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) reached Guatemala today, 9 October, the first having arrived on 7 October; PADRU's water and sanitation expert also reached Guatemala today. Two Regional Intervention Team (RIT)s members from Costa Rica, experienced in disaster management, are also travelling to Guatemala. These staff will assist the Guatemalan Red Cross in on-going damage and needs assessments and in the coordination of the relief operation. The Guatemalan Red Cross has set up collection centres in its branches located in the disaster-affected areas: these include Retalhuleu, Mazatenango, Quetzaltenango, Coatepeque, San Marcos, Tecún Umán, El Palmar, Guatemala, Concepción Chiriquichapa and Tejutlá. Search and rescue operations continue to be carried out, to date particularly in Santa Rosa and Escuintla. Red Cross personnel and volunteers are striving to reach San Marcos but this is currently impossible as the area is inaccessible except by air. A total of 17,490 kg of humanitarian aid from national donations has been sent in 10 flights from Guatemala City to Retalhuleu, El Alamo and Quetzaltenango for onward distribution. These goods include rain ponchos, drinking water and food. An additional two small planes have carried medicines. The Guatemalan Red Cross is active in shelters set up throughout the country and is contributing to efficient management of these refuges. To date, the National Society is working in the following shelters:

Shelter

San Marcos
 Tejutlá
 Tecún Umán
 Retalhuleu
 Mazatenango
 Quetzaltenango
 Concepción Chiquirichapa

Population housed

90 people
 4,200 people
 6,880 people
 3,640 people
 2,066 people
 1,740 people
 6,600 people

Coatepeque	14,226 people
El Palmar	3,834 people

Emergency relief (food and non-food)

Objective: 3,000 families in Guatemala will have benefited from the distribution of food and non-food relief items in order to help them to recover from the effects of the floods.

Today, 9 October a flight reached Guatemala from Panama with the following relief items: 3,500 blankets, 1,000 hygiene kits, 1,000 kitchen kits and 4,000 tooth brushes. In addition, 1,000 food parcels have been purchased locally in order to begin relief distributions as swiftly as possible. It is planned that, as of Sunday, 9 October, an air bridge and road routes, where possible, will be set up from Retalhuleu to ensure onward mobilization of goods to Mazatenango, El Palmar, Coatepeque and Tecún Umán. It is planned initially to provide 300 relief kits including food parcels, hygiene kits and kitchen sets to 300 beneficiaries in Tecún Umán, 300 in Coatepeque, 200 in Retalhuleu, 100 in Mazatenango and 100 in El Palmar. This is expected to take approximately 3 to 4 days depending on conditions.

Impact:

Given the major needs as a result of floods and landslides, the swift delivery of relief items is assisting those worst-affected by the disaster.

Constraints:

Continued rain, major mudslides and difficulties of access, particularly to remote, isolated villages, is complicating the relief efforts.

Health

Objective: Targeted communities affected by the floods will have an increased awareness of health, hygiene and sanitation issues.

Activities towards this objective will be implemented once the emergency phase of the relief operation has been completed.

Disaster Preparedness

Objective: The capacities of the communities in the affected areas will have been strengthened.

Activities towards this objective will be implemented once the emergency phase of the relief operation has been completed.

Strengthening Capacities

Objective: Targeted branches in high-risk areas will have been strengthened in the area of disaster response.

Activities towards this objective will be implemented once the emergency phase of the relief operation has been completed.

Federation Coordination

The Guatemalan Red Cross is coordinating closely with the national emergency body, CONRED and is in communication with both PNS and external partners, including UN agencies. A press communiqué has been issued inviting international agencies to provide assistance to respond to this major disaster.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement -- Principles and initiatives

- Beneficiary selection criteria focus on the vulnerability of those affected.
- The relief operation is prioritizing assistance to children and the elderly.
- Activities are based on the SPHERE Project Humanitarian Charter and the Code of Conduct for emergency response.
- Transparency will be ensured through the production of regular reports and news bulletins.
- All objectives put forward in the appeal are in line with Strategy 2020, as well as the Strategy for the Movement and the Principles and rules of the Movement.

National Society Capacity Building

The relief operation will further build the capacities of the Guatemalan Red Cross headquarters and branches, particularly in the area of relief coordination, logistics management, damage and needs assessment and beneficiary selection. Once the relief phase has been completed, further emphasis will be placed on the strengthening of branches and disaster preparedness and mitigation work in vulnerable communities.

Communications – Advocacy and Public Information

Press releases are being issued by the Guatemalan Red Cross and news articles are constantly being published on the Federation's web page www.ifrc.org

Further, more detailed information on the relief operations in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico and Haiti, as well as El Salvador via Appeal 05EA020, will be published in future operations updates as soon as information becomes available.