

Honduras: Humanitarian Assistance

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Joint efforts of the Honduran Red Cross, the Federation Delegation and very active bilaterally Participating National Societies already yield results in the rehabilitation, institutional development and disaster preparedness activities .

The context

In November 1998, Hurricane Mitch devastated Central America, most particularly Honduras. *Mitch* was the worst natural phenomenon in the history of this country and, to date, it is considered one of the worst disasters to strike Latin America in the last 200 years.

Strong winds, floods and destruction caused by torrential rainfall wiped out entire communities, crops, roads and bridges. The total damage caused by Mitch in Honduras is equivalent to approximately 70% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). The total number of 5,657 persons died and 8,058 are missing. One and a half million people were directly or indirectly affected by the hurricane.

Hurricanes, earthquakes and earth slides are all well-known natural phenomena in Honduras. But Mitch was of such strength that it wreaked catastrophic devastation and completely annihilated the country's ability to respond. Poverty, population growth and the deterioration of the environment played a major role, turning Hurricane Mitch into a human disaster.

Latest events

A number of international organisations have begun producing studies on Honduras' vulnerability to natural disasters. In March, the Seismology Department of the Autonomous University of Honduras issued a report indicating earthquake-prone zones this year - Francisco Morazán, Islas de la Bahía,

Santa Bárbara, Copán, Amapala, Trujillo, Colón, San Pedro de Sula and Choluteca. USAID prepared a CD mapping vulnerability in the country.

At the beginning of the year, a conflict between Honduras and Nicaragua followed the ratification by Honduras of the coastal border agreement with Colombia. The government of Nicaragua considered the agreement an attack on its sovereignty. At present, the situation has calmed down and tension between the two countries is only related to customs i.e. trade.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The national rehabilitation plan of the Honduran Red Cross was prepared in collaboration with the Federation delegation and all bilaterally Participating National Societies (PNSs) present in the country.

The Federation’s Secretary General and the Director of Americas Department visited Honduras in order to get a better insight on the progress in the programmes implemented by the Honduran Red Cross with support of the Federation.

A jointly prepared study estimates that the Honduran Red Cross has 253 projects for the victims of the hurricane Mitch, with the following breakdown:

Identified:	40
Completed:	82
Being implemented:	102
Approved:	17
To be implemented:	7
Unspecified:	5

Housing •

The Honduran Red Cross and bilaterally Participating National Societies, as well as the Federation delegation, are aware of the housing shortage (85,000 houses) in Honduras and, from the beginning of the emergency, planned housing construction projects designed to resettle the affected communities to the safe land, outside the risk zones. Socio-economic studies of the victims were used to select the beneficiaries, giving preference to the most vulnerable. One of the biggest difficulties encountered in getting these projects under way was the allocation of land by the government which, at times, delayed the construction process.

The housing construction projects are intended to greatly improve the quality of life of the beneficiaries by providing them safe, appropriate houses and creating proper community conditions to cope with another possible disaster. The communities have actively participated in most of the projects, with the beneficiaries helping to build their own house. These projects have also provided young people training in such jobs as masonry and carpentry.

See Annex 2 for details on the housing projects progress.

Construction and renovation of schools •

Hurricane Mitch affected a large number of schools in Honduras, leaving thousands of children temporarily without access to education. Some of the school buildings in better condition were used to shelter disaster victims, but others were destroyed or represented a safety risk to children. The Red Cross wished to be part of the global rehabilitation of the communities and thus considered renovation and reconstruction of schools a strategic step in this process of community development.

The following table indicates the schools the Honduran Red Cross has identified either for renovation

Department	Number of Schools	Financed by
Atlántida	3	Spanish RC
Choluteca	7	German RC
Colón	6	Spanish RC
Cortés	34	Spanish RC
Francisco Morazán	16	Spanish RC
Olancho	1	American RC
Santa Bárbara	3	German RC
Yoro	13	Spanish RC
TOTAL	83	

or reconstruction. At present, only ten of those school reconstruction projects have

been completed on bilateral basis in the departments of Santa Bárbara (3) and Choluteca (7).

Water/sanitation •

Housing projects generally go hand in hand with the water and sanitation projects. In most of the projects, the bilaterally Participating National Societies have co-ordinated and worked together on the construction of the water and sanitation system. In Honduras, there are many examples of this co-ordination between the different components of the Movement. One of the most recent ones is the co-operation between the American and German Red Cross Societies in Nueva Gualiqueme, benefiting 156 persons.

Department	Community	Beneficiaries (Families)	Water systems	Latrines	Wells	Financed by
Atlántida	Barrios Periféricos	46	X			Spanish RC
Colón	Prieta	245	X			Spanish RC
	Tocoa	234	X			Spanish RC
	Concepción	198	X			Spanish RC
Cortés	Nuevos Horizontes	196	X			Spanish RC
	Nva. Jerusalem	500	X			Spanish RC
	La Democracia	198	X			Spanish RC
	La Mesa	500	X			Spanish RC
	Aldea Santiago	600	X			Spanish RC
	Vegas de Ulua		X			Spanish RC
	Nueva Esperanza	136	X			Spanish RC
	El Paraiso	74	X			Spanish RC
	Suyapa	126	X			Spanish RC
	La Protección	148	X			Spanish RC
Choluteca	Nueva Gualiqueme	26	X	X		American RC
	Nueva Marcovia	240	X	X		American RC
Frc. Morazán	Hospital Escuela	3437 (persons)	X			Spanish RC
	Talanga	400	X			Federation
Valle	San Lorenzo	95		X		Swiss RC
	San Lorenzo				X	Swiss RC
Total		3962	18	3	1	

With the budget of USD 14,300 and in co-operation with the Federation delegation and the SANAA (National Autonomous Service for Sewer and Water Systems), the Honduran Red Cross will carry out a drinking water project benefiting 400 families in Talanga, north of the capital.

The International Federation is also considering support to a drinking water system project in the Mogola en Marcal community in La Paz department.

Wat/san projects focus on drinking water supply and the treatment of sewage. The construction of latrines is crucial for the community health and elimination of the sources of diseases such as malaria, dengue fever and cholera. All communities will be trained in maintenance and correct use of the water systems installed by the Red Cross.

Environmental protection is another objective of these projects providing training on the treatment of organic and inorganic wastes for the communities.

Together with the Swedish and Austrian Red Cross Societies, the Federation delegation organised an ERU (Emergency Response Unit) workshop. Such workshops focus on the chemical treatment of water, production of drinking water as well as on storage and distribution to the population affected by a natural or man made disaster. Seventeen Honduran red cross volunteers as well as volunteers from Colombia, Nicaragua and Peru took part in the workshop and acquired knowledge on running drinking water plants and pumps.

Health •

In line with the Federation's strategy, the Honduran Red Cross will implement a primary health care programme to improve the lives of the most vulnerable. They also plan to train Red Cross volunteers in various branches and communities in primary health care i.e. preventive health (childhood diseases, reproductive health, HIV-AIDS, health in disaster situations, first aid). An agreement will be signed with the Secretary of Health establishing the course of action and accountability in this project.

Training of volunteers and the community members with the support of the bilaterally Participating Societies represents a crucial part of the health programme carried out by the Honduran red Cross.

The American Red Cross trained and equipped 30 paramedics who will, in turn, carry out basic health courses in local communities.

The Swiss Red Cross carried out primary health care courses for volunteers in three branches in the department of Valle.

The Canadian Red Cross is in the final planning phase with its primary health care project in the department of Comayagua. In March this year, the institutional capacity of the branches in that department was assessed by external consultants.

The German Red Cross helped renovate a hospital in San Lorenzo, a city situated in the south of the country. This basically involved the construction of a containing wall and of an adjacent building for the treatment of alcoholics as well as the improvements on the hospital's drainage system.

Institutional Development •

The Honduran Red Cross has prepared a Memorandum of Understanding on development with the Federation delegation in Honduras. This document defines responsibilities and general lines of conduct in the capacity building process.

The Federation delegation has held several workshops on Institutional Development and, more particularly, on Strategy 2010. These workshops were organised in the departments of El Paraíso,

Valle, Cortés and Comayagua, with the support of the Netherlands, Swiss, Spanish and Canadian Red Cross Societies. The objective of these workshops is to identify the needs of the branches with regard to “*the characteristics of a well functioning branch*” in order to classify their activities within the Federation’s Strategy 2010 and to establish plans of action and future commitments.

The bilaterally Participating Societies and the Federation delegation are focused on enhancing the National Society’s management capacity as well as on consolidating its financial and administrative base. They also work closely with the branches, helping to strengthen their capacity to identify, formulate, implement and evaluate community projects and giving the volunteers a valuable lesson in the management of community-based projects.

The bilaterally Participating National Societies renovated and expanded some of the Honduran Red Cross branches damaged by Mitch. With the newly-identified community development needs, these

facilities have, however, become too small. Each bilaterally PNS has reconstructed its respective branches and, in some instances, built special facilities for workshops and training.

The Italian Red Cross has been supporting the Honduran red cross blood programme, providing equipment and supplies to the blood banks in Tegucigalpa and Sun Pedro Sula. A new building is planned for the blood bank in San Pedro Sula. Efforts are being directed towards raising quality standards in blood processing and increasing the number of voluntary donations.

Disaster Preparedness •

The International Federation has begun its disaster preparedness programme for the Honduran Red Cross Disaster Management Office (OPADE). The programme focuses on relief and community education. The aim is to provide the most vulnerable communities with the necessary means to react properly to an emergency, to identify existing threats and to work out family and community emergency plans.

The American Red Cross has trained 24 facilitators in community education. In total, 1,909 persons from more than 50 communities selected by the branches of La Esperanza, Talanga, Juticapla and Catacamas took part in the workshops. The Mexican Red Cross trained 75 urban rescue brigade volunteers in rescuing traffic accidents victims. The water rescue brigade received a donation in training equipment.

With the support of the Netherlands Red Cross and the Federation, the Honduran Red Cross prepared a play entitled “Prevention is better than cure”, illustrating community education in disaster prevention. This play, designed for children, conveys the main messages of the Federation’s disaster prevention programme.

The Red Cross branches and first aid bodies have carried out training and awareness campaigns with local communities in preparation for the Easter week and in order to reduce traffic accidents during this hectic vacation period in Honduras. The road accident mortality rate is very high in Honduras and the Red Cross, together with the police and fire service, is one of the busiest organisations during this period

Outstanding needs

The Federation operation is financed by the Spanish Red Cross. Funds were also reallocated from the last year operation. The Japanese Red Cross will visit the field in May in order to get more familiar with the operation. There are outstanding financial needs with the priority areas within DP and ID. Additional funds are needed for the operational costs.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

To show solidarity with the population of Venezuela, the Honduran Red Cross organised a radio marathon for the flood victims. It was also intended towards raising public awareness about the large-scale human disasters. In addition, the Honduran Red Cross representatives showed their appreciation for the support received from the Venezuelan people during Hurricane Mitch. By mid-February, special bank accounts were made available, information and fund-raising stands were set up and a truck was used to collect goods and medicines. Immediately after the disaster, the Honduran Red Cross supported Venezuela with USD 2,000.

The International Federation took part in the follow up meeting organised on the Stockholm Agreement by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in Honduras on 7 and 8 February. The Head of Delegation took the opportunity to present the Federation's activities in the country and distribute information material on the Movement to the participants. This meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss future co-operation in different fields with the current minister of the Honduras Social Investment Fund (FISH). All participants were satisfied with the organisation of the event and praised the government initiatives to improve the situation in the country and its transparent and decentralised activities. The governments of the United States and Japan made the biggest commitment to the country, contributing together about one million dollars.

In March, Honduras organised a training course on "Humanitarian Contingency" for the members of the armed forces of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. During the course, they participated in training on disaster evacuation and rescue operations prepared by the American armed forces. The Red Cross may be invited to future training sessions as an observer or to teach first aid. The Honduran Red Cross has already started training the members of the Honduras army.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Conclusion

Honduras is a disaster-prone country as highlighted in all documents on the country's vulnerability presented by different international agencies in the recent months. We must, therefore, continue focusing our activities on disaster preparedness and response.

The rainy season is approaching and most of the programmes are geared to disaster preparedness. Training for future disasters is important and volunteers and civil society are preparing to confront them more effectively, so as to reduce their effect to the minimum. The Permanent Contingency Board (COPECO) has begun training the civil population in disaster preparedness through meetings with the communities and municipalities.

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This and other reports on Federation operations are available on the Federation's website: <http://www.ifrc.org>

Department	Community	Beneficiaries (families)	Identified	Under way	Finalised	Financed by:
Atlántida	La Ceiba	100		100		Spanish RC
Choluteca	Nva. Sta Martha	34			34	German RC
	Barrial Limones	24			24	German RC
	Marcovia	240			240	German RC
	Barrial Centro	33			33	German RC
	Apacilagua	85			85	German RC
	Malpaso	25			25	German RC
	Nvo. Gualiqueme	25			25	German RC
	Rehabilitación*	135			135	German RC
Colón	Cauca Jaral	33		33		Spanish RC
	Dos Bocas	15		15		Spanish RC
Comayagua	Comayagua	50	50			Canadian RC
	Siguetepeque	50	50			Canadian RC
	Taulabé	50	50			Canadian RC
Cortés	La Garroba	173		173		Spanish RC
	Cruz de Valencia	108		108		Spanish RC
	La Compasión	80		80		Spanish RC
Fco. Morazán	Amarateca	1500	1500			Spanish RC
	Sta. Rosa	464		464		Spanish RC
Olancho	Juticalpa	82		31	51 (90%)	Italian RC
	Catacamas	100		100		American Rc
	La Avispa	20		20		Federation/American RC.
Sta, Bárbara	Las Vegas	21			21	German RC
	Colinas	52		52		German RC
	Los Puentes	19		19		German RC
	Las Palmas	32		32		German RC
	La Unión	23		23		German RC
	San Luis	20			20	German RC
Valle	Nacaome	83		48	35	German RC/Swiss RC
	San Lorenzo	58		12	46	German RC/Swiss RC
	Amapala	36			36	German RC
Yoro	Las Mercedes	35		35		Spanish RC
	El Batán	40		40		Spanish RC
	El Arenal	40		40		Spanish RC
	El Cafetal	25		25		Spanish RC
Total		3910	1650	1450	810	3910

ANNEX 2

THE HOUSING PROJECTS
financed bilaterally and by the Federation

