

Alert

Central America – No. 16/2010

Tropical Storm Agatha in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua

Geneva, 2 June 2010

1. Brief description of the emergency

On 29 May 2010, a low pressure system developed into a tropical storm over Central America, spanning the area from Guatemala to Nicaragua.

2. Impact

Since then, the storm has killed at least 145 people - 118 in Guatemala, 17 in Honduras, nine in El Salvador and one in Nicaragua. Dozens of people are still missing after landslides and floods destroyed entire communities. El Salvador and Honduras have declared red alerts. In Guatemala, the Government has declared a State of Public Calamity.

The National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (CONRED), in Guatemala, reports that the areas worst affected are: central Meseta, Chimaltenango and Sacatepéquez. In the Pacific region, the impact has been felt in Escuintla, Suchitepéquez and Retalhuleu. In the North West, the impact has been felt in San Marcos, Sololá, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, Quiché and Alta Verapaz.

CONRED estimated that 27,112 people experienced material losses, and 111,964 people were evacuated, of whom 29,245 were in temporary shelters. A total of 5509 houses were reported damaged.

Rescuers are still trying to reach isolated communities after roads and bridges were destroyed by the storm. Tens of thousands of people are living in temporary shelters, and the need for food, water, blankets and clothes is very high.

The western part of Nicaragua has also been heavily affected by the rains of the weekend, and the Air Force had to rescue dozens of people trapped by the floods.

3. National and international response

In Guatemala, CONRED has declared a state of national calamity in order to facilitate the mobilization of resources to affected areas and has appealed for international support. On May 29, the President called upon the international community to help. Health authorities have deployed medical teams, with the support of Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization, to assist the affected population.

4. ACT Alliance Response

On 1 June, the Central America ACT forum hosted a teleconference of national forum coordinators of affected countries. Results of the preliminary assessment by the forums indicate that each country has been affected differently. Worst affected is Guatemala, because of the eruption of the Pacaya volcano a week before, and because of the strength of tropical storm Agatha. Guatemala forum members plan to present a preliminary appeal in the next few days. El Salvador forum plans to present a Rapid Response Fund request on 3 June. Honduras and Nicaragua need to make further assessments of the damage and the need for response.

The forums will coordinate closely to support implementation of any ACT appeals for this situation. In Guatemala, members have already supported clean-up activities at community level, provided shelter and assisted with evacuation of the population.

5. Planned activities

As an immediate response, the ACT Alliance schedules distribution of food, and non-food assistance, such as hygiene kits, kitchen utensils and water filters. Rehabilitation activities will include distribution of seeds, agricultural inputs and tools and technical assistance for small holders, in particular those with children, women and elderly.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to Jessie Kgoroadira, ACT Chief Finance Officer (jkg@actalliance.org).

Thank you for your attention.

For further information please contact the ACT Secretariat:

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