



November 4, 2011

I. SUMMARY

- Ten days of continuous, heavy rains from Oct. 10-20 cause widespread flooding and mud slides in Central America and southern Mexico
- Over 100 deaths confirmed and more than 700,000 people affected
- El Salvador hardest hit with 10% of its national territory under water at the peak of the flooding
- Massive agricultural losses as year-end harvest and seeds for next year's planting destroyed
- ELCA commits \$185,000 for relief efforts in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua
- For more information visit www.elca.org/disaster and blogs.elca.org/disasterresponse

II. SITUATION

Five Central American countries and parts of southern Mexico were struck with 10 days of torrential rains from October 10-20. The result was massive flooding and mudslides that caused more than 100 deaths and affected the homes & livelihoods of an estimated 700,000 people: 300,000 in El Salvador, 175,000 in Guatemala, 150,000 in Nicaragua, 55,000 in Honduras and 1,000 in Costa Rica.

As the flood waters recede, communities that were initially unreachable have become accessible. The improved access has allowed governments, humanitarian aid agencies and churches to assess damages, begin the distribution of emergency assistance and start identifying longer-term needs for recovery. Of major concern is the massive loss in crops that were coming to harvest just when the rains struck. In El Salvador alone, the agriculture sector is expected to suffer losses of at least \$300 million.

El Salvador. The 86.6 inches of rainfall is the most recorded for the country in the past 50 years, triggering flooding and landslides in 181 (69%) of the country's 262 municipalities. The number of flooded homes stands at 20,000 but the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) warns that this number could climb with renewed access to areas previously cut off. Nearly 59,000 people are being housed in 618 emergency shelters, including one in the Cara Sucia area run by the Salvadoran Lutheran Church. Concerns continue around a lack of potable water, contaminated wells and basic sanitation within shelters.¹

According to Salvadoran Civil Protection and UN authorities, 1 out of every 20 Salvadorans has been severely affected by the flooding. The total economic impact is an estimated \$840 million in losses, reducing economic growth for 2011 from 2.1% to 1.4%. The agriculture sector has estimated losses of

¹ OCHA Situation Report No. 3, Tropical Depression 12-E in Central America, 23 October 2011.

\$300 million and the damage to homes, schools and health centers is estimated at \$208 million. These figures do not take into account the property losses and lost income suffered by individual households.

Guatemala. According to figures released on Oct. 19 by the National Coordination for the Reduction of Disasters (CONRED), there have been 38 deaths directly attributable to the torrential rains and flooding. Of the total population affected, over 78,000 have been left homeless. Nearly 30,000 were evacuated from their homes, including 15,000 who were transferred to emergency shelters.

Initial damage assessments by the Augustinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala (ILAG), in 12 indigenous communities located in the northern departments of Quiché, Peten and Alta Verapaz, indicate widespread crop losses in all 12 communities, including near-total losses of the 2011 harvest in at least half of those communities. In the Santa Elena community (located on the banks of the Chisec River), local peasant farmers face an especially uncertain future. In addition to losing this year's harvest & seeds for the next planting season, they also lost their farmland when the river overflowed its banks and changed its course. It now flows through the middle of what used to be their fields.

Nicaragua. Heavy rains led to 27 people being killed, 150,000 people affected, destroyed bridges, 1,000 kilometers of damaged roads and highways. The most affected populations were in the Pacific and North departments where the rains were extremely intense, leading to raised rivers and leaving entire communities flooded for numerous days. Some communities were completely isolated by the flood waters and many of the crops were severely damaged. The most affected crops were beans, sorghum, coffee and sugar cane, with nearly 5% of the first harvest being totally lost or affected.

The municipalities of Villa Nueva, Somotillo and Somoto are particularly affected around health due to the excess moisture of rains, flooding of damaged latrines and contamination of water sources. This has led to an increased mosquito population which threatens an increase in malaria. Also because of poor road conditions these communities are experiencing a shortage of food supplies. Villa Nueva is also affected by extreme poverty, which makes it particularly vulnerable. Of the total population, 75.3% live in a state of poverty and of these 31.8% live in extreme poverty.

Honduras. According to the country's Permanent Commission for Emergencies (COPECO), 13 deaths have been reported. More than 55,000 persons have been affected, including 12,000 evacuees and more than 8,000 persons living in temporary shelters – principally in the departments of Choluteca and Valle located in the southeast corner of the country. Infrastructure losses include over 3,600 homes damaged/destroyed, 169 highways closed/damaged, 60 schools damaged and 37 bridges either partially damaged or destroyed.

III. COORDINATED RESPONSE

ELCA is supporting the work of global mission companions to provide clean water, food, shelter and longer-term help in the region. Thanks to the generous gifts of ELCA members, congregations and companion synods committed to the region, the ELCA has provided \$130,000 for flood relief efforts of the Salvadoran Lutheran Church and the Lutheran World Federation in El Salvador, \$20,000 for relief

efforts of the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church (ILFE), \$15,000 for relief efforts in Guatemala and \$20,000 for immediate humanitarian response in Honduras.

In **El Salvador**, the two principal local actors – the Salvadoran Lutheran Church and the LWF/DWS program – have completed initial damage assessments and prepared a coordinated appeal for flood relief which totals \$1,077,150. Humanitarian assistance will be provided to 1,750 families (approximately 8,750 persons) in 41 communities across 27 municipalities located in the departments of Ahuachapan, La Paz, San Salvador, Santa Ana, Sonsonate and Usulután.

During the first three months, the planned response includes distribution of emergency food assistance, personal hygiene kits, medical attention for families still living in shelters and distribution of basic medicines. After the initial three month period, the focus will shift to agricultural recovery support for small-scale farmers and psycho-social assistance, especially for children. The food kits will be distributed twice a month over three months and will include corn flour, beans, rice, cooking oil, salt, pasta, matches, coffee and sugar. The hygiene kits will be distributed once a month over two months and will include toothpaste, tooth brushes, soap, toilet paper, cotton diapers, detergent and sanitary pads. 1,000 families, consisting of 5 or more people will receive a medical kit. These kits will include anti-parasite pills, acetaminophen pills for adults and children, cough syrup, tubes of clotrimazole, anti-allergy pills, eye drops, antacid tablets, and a kit box

In **Guatemala**, the Augustinian Lutheran Church (ILAG) has approximately \$20,000 in ELCA Disaster Response funds available for the immediate provision of food assistance to families living in rural, indigenous communities in the northern departments of Quiché, Peten and Alta Verapaz. Initial ILAG damage assessments in 12 indigenous communities indicate that at least 182 families have suffered major crop losses and will require some level of emergency food assistance during the dry season. Within 30 days, a more detailed assessment of actual crop and seed losses will be completed, providing the basis to determine an agricultural recovery plan for the next planting season in the spring of 2012.

The LWF, with other ACT Alliance members, is responding and gathering information in 21 prioritized communities. The proposed response is to deliver food and hygiene kits to 1,102 families (1,522 men and 792 boys, 1,692 women and 933 girls, 10 pregnant women) the communities, spanning 7 municipalities of Guatemala. The criteria for selecting families was

- Families whose primary source of livelihood is totally destroyed or severely damaged
- Female-headed households (with dependent girls and boys)
- Families with elderly people
- Large families
- Pregnant women

The food distributions include corn, beans, wheat flour, sugar, salt and vegetal oil. The hygiene kits include soaps for bathing and laundry, sanitary pads, toothpaste and tooth brushes. The ELCA has committed \$15,000 to this response.

In **Nicaragua**, the Faith & Hope Lutheran Church (ILFE), the LWF/DWS country program and other local humanitarian agencies have begun coordinated flood relief activities for 933 families (approximately 4,925 persons) in 23 affected communities in the municipalities of Villanueva and Somotillo (Chinandega), and San Francisco Libre (Managua). They will be delivering emergency food assistance (rice, sugar, beans, cooking oil, cereal & salt), medicines and family hygiene kits, as well as basic bedding materials (sheets, mattresses, mosquito nets) in the case of families still living in shelters.

ELCA's companion church – the Faith & Hope Lutheran Church of Nicaragua (ILFE) – and the regional program of the Lutheran World Federation Dept. for World Service (LWF/DWS) have a strong presence in Chinandega; ILFE also has mission congregations in Madriz. Both ILFE and LWF/DWS are working in concert with municipal and local disaster response committees in the assessment of damages and the coordinated delivery of humanitarian assistance. The South Dakota Synod of the ELCA, a companion of ILFE, has also sent \$2,000 to help with the immediate response.

ILFE has also completed damage assessments in 10 other localities where the Lutheran church has a permanent presence and identified an additional 250 families in need of assistance. These families will be provided with corn, beans, oil, sugar, oats and salt for 15 days. 135 families will be provided with seed to sow 1.75 acres each. Priority needs include emergency food assistance, seeds for agricultural recovery and roofing materials (in the case of families whose roofs were partially/totally destroyed) at a total cost of just over \$20,000.

In **Honduras**, the LWF/DWS country program is coordinating flood relief activities for 1,000 families (approximately 6,000) persons in 55 communities located in the municipalities of El Triunfo, Orocuina, Pespire, Apacilagua and Cuaren. Because of their physical isolation, these communities were not reached by the initial wave of humanitarian assistance. For this reason, the response is giving priority to communities in these five rural municipalities.

The immediate needs are food and medicine for the prevention of post-disaster disease. This initial response will cover 8 weeks and will include the distribution of food supplies to 1,000 families and medical supplies for the 55 communities. The food supplies will include butter, rice, sugar, corn flour, beans and spaghetti, tomato paste, sardines, salt, coffee and chlorine. The medical kits will include antiparasitic tablets for adults and children, ibuprofen, antidiarrhea medicine and hydrating solutions.

IV. FUNDRAISING

The ELCA has opened a designated account (Central America Flooding) to receive gifts for response efforts to this disaster, as well as designated accounts for the four most affected countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras & Nicaragua). One hundred percent (100%) of all gifts contributed to these funds will be used entirely to respond to this disaster both for immediate needs and long-term rehabilitation of communities and livelihoods.

Contributions to this appeal can be made in the following ways:

- Give by phone at 800-638-3522

- Donate online at: www.elca.org/disaster
- Send checks to:
 ELCA Disaster Response
 39330 Treasury Center
 Chicago, IL 60694
 Memo: Central America Flooding OR [*Designated Country*] Floods

V. COMMUNICATION

To help you share the severity of this situation and how to respond the ELCA has produced a number of resources, free to reproduce, found at www.elca.org/disaster and elsewhere. These include:

- Worship resources for this disaster
- Featured content from our companions in Central America on the ELCA Disaster Response blog at: <http://blogs.elca.org/disasterresponse/category/intl-region-latin-america-caribbean>.
 - Central America Floods: First Reports
 - Central America Floods: Reports from Nicaragua
 - Central America Floods: It's Not the Rain, But the Type of Rain
- Greater Milwaukee Synod resources
 - Partner With El Salvador (www.partnerswithelsalvador.org)
 - Tim 's El Salvador Blog (<http://luterano.blogspot.com>)
 - Linda's El Salvador Blog (<http://linda-elsalvador.blogspot.com>)

Through the companion synod program of ELCA Global Mission, specific ELCA synods with long-standing relationships in the region have also been sharing information on this humanitarian crisis and encouraging support for the relief efforts of their companion churches. Synods that have reported lifting up the concerns and needs of their companions are:

- **Greater Milwaukee Synod**, a companion synod of the Salvadoran Lutheran Church (ILS), who through their El Salvador Committee is coordinating with the Sister Parish Office of the Salvadoran Lutheran Church and the emergency response teams in El Salvador in order to share information via its web site and Facebook page. Tim Muth of Tim's El Salvador Blog, as a member of the synod's El Salvador Committee, has been instrumental in sharing information about the disaster and response efforts. Bishop Jeff Barrow sent a letter to congregations within the synod encouraging support of the relief efforts and congregations have begun to respond. On All Saints weekend, congregations throughout the synod will support their companions in prayer and through the relief efforts as part of an annual celebration of the companion synod relationship with the Salvadoran Lutheran Church. The synod is routing all of gifts received to the crisis through ELCA Disaster Response.
- **Southeastern Synod**, a companion synod of the Augustinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala (ILAG), has put out requests for ELCA Disaster Relief Funds in its newsletter and several congregations are responding. Cluster deans have also been approached to make sure congregations know how they can respond to the appeal.

- **South Dakota Synod**, a companion synod of the Faith & Hope Lutheran Church of Nicaragua (ILFE), is keeping their congregations updated through synod messages and has already sent \$2,000 to meet immediate needs in Nicaragua. In the next few weeks they will be lifting up the needs surrounding the lack of seeds for next years planting.

VI. CONTACT

Desk	Role	Name	Contact Information
ELCA International Disaster Response	Director	Megan Bradfield	megan.bradfield@elca.org x2291
	Information Specialist	Matthew Ley	matthew.ley@elca.org x2574
ELCA Domestic Disaster Response	Director	Kevin Massey	kevin.massey@elca.org x2822
	Associate Director	Michael Nevergall	michael.nevergall@elca.org x2863
	Administrative Assistant	Maria Maldonado	maria.maldonado@elca.org x2748
ELCA Global Mission, Companion Synod/Relationships	Manager for Companion Relationships, Latin America & Caribbean	Mary Campbell	mary.campbell@elca.org x2618
ELCA Marketing and Communications	Marketing Manager	Rachel Clamen	rachel.claman@elca.org x2955
ELCA World Hunger and Disaster Appeal	Director	Dan Rift	daniel.rift@elca.org x2757
	Associate Director	Audrey Riley	audrey.riley@elca.org x2715