



I. SUMMARY

- Since October 10, incessant rains in Central America have caused severe flooding & mudslides in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras & Nicaragua
- The death toll has reached 91 and continues to rise as the bodies are recovered
- Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced from their homes and are living in emergency shelters
- Catastrophic crop losses have occurred in staple foods such as corn, beans & rice just as Central American farmers were getting ready for their principal harvest
- ELCA is responding as a member of the ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) and alongside our companion Lutheran churches in each of the affected countries

II. SITUATION

Torrential rains began to fall in Central America on Oct. 10, caused by what meteorologists have called Tropical Depression 12E. For more than a week, this large, stationary low pressure system has dumped record levels of rainfall throughout Central America - principally along the Pacific Coast of Nicaragua, El Salvador & Guatemala, as well as in the Honduran departments of Choluteca and Valle along its southern border with El Salvador.

Particularly noteworthy is the case of El Salvador where measured rainfall amounts from Oct. 10-17 totaled 1,200 millimeters (mm.), nearly 1.5 times the average rainfall for the entire month of October and 40% more than the 860 mm. of rain that fell during Hurricane Mitch in 1998. Until now, Hurricane Mitch has been considered the most catastrophic weather event for Central America in recent decades.



El Salvador. In an emergency address to the nation on Oct. 17, Salvadoran president Mauricio Funes characterized the current situation as one of the worst in the country's history. A state of "public calamity and national emergency" has been declared for 60 days, and a 3-day period of national mourning is being observed from Oct. 18-20 in memory of the 32 persons who have died. Communities in ten of the country's 14 geographic departments have experienced serious flooding and/or mudslides; approximately 150,000 people have been affected, principally in the coastal areas of Ahuachapan, La Libertad, La Paz y Usulután. Over 21,000 people have taken refuge in 267 emergency shelters. More than 2,000 homes have been damaged and 14 key highways are impassable.

The municipality of San Francisco Menéndez in the SW corner of the department of Ahuachapan has been especially hard hit. Residents in all of the municipality's 28 communities have been evacuated from their homes & transported to emergency shelters. One of those shelters is the Lutheran Church's "Center for the Prevention of Disasters" in Cara Sucia which includes a community radio station that has been broadcasting information to the local population ever since Oct. 10.

The coastal area of Usulután has also been hit hard due to its proximity to the Lempa River (El Salvador's largest) which overflowed a few days after the rains began & has flooded major extensions of land in the center of the country. Residents of 10 communities along the coast of Usulután have been evacuated from their homes. Many of those families are being assisted by the local Lutheran church, its pastor, local church members and volunteers from other parts of the country.

Guatemala. According to official figures released on Oct. 17 by the National Coordination for the Reduction of Disasters (CONRED), thirteen of Guatemala's geographic departments have experienced serious flooding and/or mudslides. After only 2 days of persistent rains, CONRED declared a nationwide 'red alert' on Oct. 13; four days later a "national state of calamity" was declared and remains in effect for the next 30 days.

There have been 35 deaths directly attributable to the torrential rains that began on Oct. 10. Over 478,000 persons have experienced materials losses including 59,121 who have been left homeless. Another 23,000 people have been evacuated and 12,700 are living in emergency shelters. Crop and livestock losses are likely to be catastrophic in rural areas, including the northern departments of Quiché, Peten and Alta Verapaz where the majority of congregations/missions of the Augustinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala (ILAG) are located, as well as rural communities served by the World Service Program of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF/DWS). The ILAG and LWF/DWS are ELCA's two principal global companions in Guatemala.

Nicaragua. Like its neighbors to the north, Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega declared a "state of national calamity" on Oct. 17 in response to a week of persistent rains which have affected nearly 134,000 people in the departments of Managua, Esteli, Carazo, Matagalpa, Chinandega and Leon. According to official figures, 8 deaths have been reported thus far. Flood waters have left 15,000 families stranded; the homes of another 12,000 families have either been completely inundated or suffered

significant flood damage. Municipal and local committees for the prevention, mitigation & attention of disasters have been activated in the affected departments.

The current situation in Nicaragua is similar to the torrential rains & flooding caused by tropical storm Matthew almost exactly a year ago. Now, as then, dozens of communities have been evacuated, thousands of families have been left homeless and key infrastructure such as bridges and roads have suffered serious damage. Two straight years of major crop losses (corn, beans and other basic grains) constitutes a grave concern for peasant farmers who rely on the harvest at this time of the year to feed their families during the dry season, and also to supply them with seeds for the next planting season that begins in May 2012.

Honduras. After a week of heavy rains, twelve of Honduras' departments remain on 'yellow alert' and the southern departments of Choluteca and Valle are on 'red alert'. According to the country's Permanent Commission for Emergencies (COPECO), 13 deaths have been reported. A total of nearly 70,000 persons have been affected, including 12,000 evacuees and more than 8,000 persons living in temporary shelters – principally in Choluteca and Valle. Infrastructure losses include 68 highways either closed/damaged, 42 schools damaged, and 23 bridges either partially damaged or destroyed.

III. COORDINATED RESPONSE

ELCA has been in regular contact with our global mission companions in the four affected countries including companion Lutheran churches – the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod (SLS), the Augustinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala (ILAG), the Faith & Hope Lutheran Church of Nicaragua (ILFE) and the Lutheran Christian Church of Honduras (ICLH) – as well as the regional program of the Lutheran World Federation Dept. for World Service (LWF/DWS).

In **El Salvador**, the two principal local actors – the Salvadoran Lutheran Church and the LWF/DWS program – have completed an initial round of damage assessments. As a result, nearly \$243,000 have been requested for immediate humanitarian assistance to 1,122 families (approximately 5,611 persons) in 12 municipalities located in the departments of La Paz, Sonsonate, Usulután, San Salvador and Ahuachapán. For the next 60 days, the planned response includes distribution of emergency food assistance, personal hygiene kits, medical attention in the shelters where these 1,122 families are living and distribution of basic medicines – all in accordance with the globally-recognized Sphere standards for the quality and quantity of humanitarian aid.

In **Guatemala**, the Augustinian Lutheran Church (ILAG) has positioned ELCA Disaster Response funds for the immediate provision of emergency food assistance to families living in rural, indigenous communities in the northern departments of Quiché, Peten and Alta Verapaz. The full extent of property, crop & livestock losses in communities where ILAG congregations/missions are located will be determined as soon as weather conditions allow the resumption of telecommunications and travel

between the national church headquarters in Guatemala City and the affected areas in the interior of the country – a distance of 500 km. or more in many cases.

Local actors in Guatemala – including the LWF/DWS country program, two national ecumenical organizations, two international aid agencies and their respective local partners - are also in the process of conducting damage assessments in 11 municipalities located in 7 departments (Peten, Alta Verapaz, Suchitepequez, Chimaltenango, Quetzaltenango, Huehuetenango and Quiche). The partial information collected thus far indicates a likely need for emergency food assistance, personal hygiene kits and water purification systems.

In **Nicaragua**, local actors including the Council of Protestant Churches (CEPAD), the Faith & Hope Lutheran Church (ILFE) and the LWF/DWS country program are preparing a coordinated response in the municipalities of Villanueva and Somotillo (Chinandega), San Francisco Libre (Managua) and Jinotepe (Carazo). ILFE is also conducting formal damage assessments in other localities where the Lutheran church has a permanent presence. Thus far, efforts to reach these communities have been severely hampered by impassable roads and poor telecommunications. An initial appeal for the immediate distribution of food to 270 high need families has been issued by ILFE as damage assessments continue. ELCA Disaster Response funds have been deployed to help with this first response.

In **Honduras**, local actors – coordinated by the LWF/DWS country program – are organizing a coordinated response in Choluteca and Valle, the two departments which have suffered the worst effects of the rains, flooding and mudslides. On Oct. 17, a response team of ACT Alliance members with permanent programs in the region visited affected communities for the purpose of conducting damage assessments and identifying the most urgent needs. An appeal for the distribution of immediate humanitarian aid is being prepared, the magnitude and specifics of which are not yet known.

IV. FUNDRAISING

The ELCA has opened a designated account (Central America Floods) 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 Floods 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 Flooding: First Reports

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