

Guatemala: IOM Begins Delivery Of Humanitarian Assistance To Families Affected By Heavy Rains In The Remote Areas Of Northern Guatemala

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IOM and COOPI, one of its local partners, this week began a 600-kilometre journey to the remote northern department of Petén to deliver humanitarian assistance to 685 families (3,165 persons) who were forced to flee their homes following heavy rains that affected Central America recently.

"This distribution is a real challenge. To reach these families, who lost many of their meager belongings to the heavy downpours, it means driving 520 kilometres to the capital of the Department of Petén and from there another 100 kilometres to reach the families," explains Sebastián Berkovich of IOM Guatemala.

As part of this post disaster initiative, funded by the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), IOM and its local partners (COOPI, CRS, ESFRA and SHARE) are distributing kitchen, hygiene and agricultural tool kits and winter essentials such as clothing, sheets, pillows and blankets to 2,000 families in the departments of Champerico, Retalhuleu, Santa Rosa, Izabal, Guatemala, Escuintla, Jutiapa and Petén, who were affected by the heavy rains that swept across Central America in October.

In Central America, it is estimated that 123 persons were killed and tens of thousands were forced to flee their homes. In Guatemala, 51 persons lost their lives and 254,000 others were directly impacted.

Several days of non-stop rains caused rivers to overflow and landslides which destroyed hundreds of homes and washed away millions of dollars in crops, mainly maize and beans which are the main staples for the population. Many schools and clinics were also damaged, severely affecting many persons living in rural areas.

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