

Alert

Brazil – 19/2010

Floods in Northeastern State of Alagoas

Geneva, 2 July 2010

Emergency description

Heavy tropical rains have struck the northeastern region of Brazil, severely affecting rural areas in the states of Pernambuco and Alagoas. According to the Civil Defense, the Mundaú River that runs across the affected area in the State of Alagoas has reached about 6 meters above the normal level, partially destroying 47 towns. In Pernambuco, 67 towns have been affected. A total of 72 people have died and 157,000 people are displaced in the region as a whole. Infrastructure has also been affected due to the destruction of bridges and roads. The government is using helicopters and military vehicles to reach most of the affected towns, in order to deliver immediate relief.

Impact

The town of Santana do Mundaú, in the Alagoas State, is the worst affected. It has been totally destroyed, with destruction including government buildings, schools and its only hospital. According to the Civil Defense, the town will have to be rebuilt in another area, much further from the riverbank. Of the 26,700 displaced people in the state, 2539 are in Santana do Mundaú.

National and international response

The government has declared a state of emergency in both states. Federal and state governments are providing food, tents and setting up military hospitals to attend to the victims while federal resources are also being mobilized to rebuild 43 health facilities that have been partially destroyed. The government is providing potable water once a week. Women, children and the elderly are the most badly affected. By decree of Brazilian President Luis Ignácio Lula da Silva, 39 affected municipalities are expected to receive grants totalling 49 million Reais (27.5 million US\$). Acting minister of Social Development and Poverty Alleviation, Mr. Romulo Paes signed, on June 29, an order allocating 8 million Reais (4.5 million US\$) to the affected municipalities in the states of Alagoas and Pernambuco. In addition, civil society organizations, including Caritas and Action Aid, are mobilizing resources by collecting and distributing food and clothes to displaced people.

ACT Alliance Response

ACT Alliance members operate in the affected region in the municipality of Santana do Mundaú and three counties with a population of about 30,000. Currently, local teams of ACT members are assessing the damage and needs of affected people. Access to the affected areas is presently difficult.

ACT Alliance member CESE (Ecumenical Coordination of Services) is also involved through the funding of small community emergency projects. However, these complementary initiatives have been insufficient. More support is needed. ACT Alliance member KOINONIA is already present in Mundaú working with its local partner, the Organization of Rural Workers (STTR, Portuguese

abbreviation) to fill gaps left by government relief work, which has been in the urban areas. The primary focus of KOINONIA and STTR is on the rural areas. The rural area of Santana do Mundaú, the largest producer of lime oranges in Brazil, had 90% of its production completely destroyed. Many lime producers lost their homes, and no longer have their main source of income.

Planned activities

KOINONIA plans to solicit funds through the Rapid Response Fund to the amount of USD 60,000, in favour of a target population of about 2000 affected families (12,000 people) of rural workers. Just over half are women and girls, 65% are children, teenagers and young people.

ACT Alliance members in Brazil, CESE – Ecumenical Coordination of Services, FLD - Lutheran Foundation of Diakonia and Christian Aid, were consulted and are in support of this course of action. KOINONIA and its local partner STTR will have the leading role in the implementation of actions with the support and accompaniment of the other ACT Alliance members.

The response is planned to take place at two levels - a) immediate relief including food, tents, clothes, blankets and potable water until the normal water supply is restored and b) support to the re-establishment of the productive life of the rural families that have lost crops, equipment and tools. This will involve distributing seeds, tools and equipment. Eventually, there may be a need to provide support for rebuilding homes.

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:

ACT Deputy General Secretary, Jill Hawkey (phone +41 22 791 6069) **or**
ACT Regional Program Officer, Michael Zschiegner, (phone +41 22 791 6420 or mobile phone +41 79 608 8133)