



REDLAC Weekly Note On Emergencies

Latin America & The Caribbean

This note is compiled for The Risk Emergency Disaster Working Group for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC) by the OCHA Regional Office through disaster monitoring and input from our Regional Humanitarian partners. This note does not intend to be an analytical tool, but a summary paper of key facts and actions reported by sources. Activities carried in affected countries are not limited to the ones reported here. Please check with sources for further information. For input, feedback and suggestions send us an email to ocha-rolac@un.org



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HIGHLIGHTS:

- **CHILE:** An 8.8 magnitude earthquake killed more than 710 people and affected at least 1.5 million people.
- **HAITI:** More than 460,000 have fled Port au Prince.
- **EASTERN CARIBBEAN:** Losses in the agricultural sector caused by drought could be around US\$4.7 million.
- **SOUTH AMERICA:** Floods and landslides are still causing impact in Bolivia and Peru.

EARTHQUAKE

Latin America and the Caribbean region are no stranger to seismic activity but the 8.8 earthquake that shook Chile has claimed more than 710 deaths so far. Other countries in the regions as Guatemala and Ecuador also experienced quakes (not related to the one in Chile) during the weekend without reporting any casualties or damage.



Chile: Major impact was on infrastructure, several roads have been damaged. Image: El Mercurio©

CHILE: On 27 February 2010, at approximately 3:35 a.m. local time, an earthquake of magnitude 8.8 occurred in the moderately populated region of Bio-Bio, in central Chile, affecting some 1.5 million

people and killing at least 710. The earthquake struck 90 kilometres north-east of the city of Concepción, the capital of Bio-Bio, and there have been 117 aftershocks (between 5.5 and 6.0) causing extensive damage throughout the region.

According to some international experts quoted by media, economic losses could rise to approximately US\$30 billion.

The Government of Chile declared six regions as zone of catastrophe: Valparaiso, Metropolitana, Libertador O'Higgins, Araucania, Bio-Bio and Maule.

An estimated 500,000 homes have been seriously damaged. It is believed that traditional structures will be most affected and indigenous populations most at risk. Access to health services will be a major challenge.

Looting activities have been reported in the Concepción area and the Government ordered night time curfew in the city.

Some 200,000 residents of Maule are without water, raising concerns on the sanitation front.

In Juan Fernando Island, affected by a Tsunami, the water has entered up to 3 kilometres in land.

There is only one road open from San Pedro to Concepcion. The road between Chile and Argentina is being prioritized for only a few vehicles. The priority

of the Government will be to reopen the Santiago airport; temporary terminals will be installed to this effect. Quintero airport is open to small flights.

Search and rescue, distribution of food, water, health and provision of sanitation remain a priority, as well as re-establishment of telecommunications and clearing roads. Following preliminary assessments, the Government welcomes support on specific items: field hospitals equipped with surgery facilities, autonomous dialysis centre, generators, field camps, satellite phones and related stations, structural damage evaluations systems, salt water purification system, mobile bridges, field kitchen, search and rescue teams.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) offered support on evaluations.

Argentinean Government together with PAHO is sending a hospital of great capacity; other four mobile health facilities are being installed by PAHO.

The United States stands ready to send aid and rescue team if requested.

IFRC has allocated US\$279,350 from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Chilean Red Cross (CRC) to initiate response and deliver immediate relief items for 3,000 families.

The American Red Cross has pledged an initial US\$50,000 from its International Response Fund and

ECHO has offered US\$3 million in emergency fund.

Source: OCHA, IFRC (2).

HAITI: Around 3 million people – one in every three Haitians – were badly affected by the 12 January quake; the majority of them in the capital, Port-au-Prince. The death toll could jump to 300,000 people, including the bodies buried under collapsed buildings in the capital. Some 250,000 houses have been destroyed and 1.5 million people are living in tent camps. The humanitarian situation in Haiti is undoubtedly improving day by day. But is clear that not everyone in need has yet been reached and much more remains to be done, particularly in terms of emergency shelter and sanitation. (1)



Haiti: Rubble of collapse buildings in downtown Port au Prince. Image: MINUSTAH- Marco Domino.©

It is estimated that more than 460,000 people have fled Port-au-Prince to move to areas less affected by the earthquake. Another 200,000 people have moved to Petit Goave and Jacmel, where IOM and its partners continue the work in the distribution of materials for shelter and non-food relief items. IOM is supporting the Haitian government in a new surge to register people displaced and to identify their areas of origin. (2)

The task from emergency shelter cluster continues to be challenging. More than 66,000 families (330,000 people) have received emergency shelter materials, but it is estimated that 70 per cent of 1.2 million people still need shelter. To fill the remaining gaps, the shelter cluster has launched a "shelter surge" - including 232,000 tarpaulins and 22,000 tents currently in the pipeline, which will be distributed immediately upon arrival.

Assessments carried out by FAO and its partners have shown that families hosting displaced people are spending their meagre savings to feed new arrivals and consuming food stocks. (1)

The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) has deployed three Spanish experts to participate in the mission Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) together with other representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the European Commission and other European Union Member States in coordination with the Government of Haiti. (3)

The main goal for this new mission is to assess the needs of reconstruction, in the following priority areas: regional development, infrastructure, social services (education, health, food security, water, hygiene and sanitation), production (fisheries and agriculture, trade and industry, tourism), governance, economic analysis and cross-cutting issues (gender and youth, environment, disaster and risk management, vulnerable populations).⁽³⁾

The assessment result will be presented at the International Conference on the Reconstruction of Haiti in New York on 31 March.⁽³⁾

The UN and its partners announced on 18 February that they are seeking over US\$1.4 billion to assist Haiti, in the largest-ever humanitarian appeal launched in the wake of a natural disaster. The revised appeal folds in the US\$577 million flash appeal issued just a few days after the earthquake. It is being expanded to meet needs for one year as the hurricane and rainy seasons approach, and its size reflects the scale of the catastrophe and takes into consideration the need for stepped-up early recovery efforts.⁽¹⁾

OCHA is tracking all official donations to various international appeals worldwide. For more information about the Haiti Appeal visit the [Financial Tracking Services website](#).

For more information about this major emergency please, visit the following humanitarian portals:

[Reliefweb](#) or [Redhum](#)

Source: UN News⁽¹⁾, IOM⁽²⁾, AECID⁽³⁾

FLOODS

Heavy rains have caused severe flooding and landslides in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay.

BOLIVIA: So far, 50,000 families have been affected.

The Government declared a national emergency. The European Commission is one of the donors of the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and has allocated € 79,996 (US\$ 115.194) to support the Bolivian Red Cross. The Commission's financial support will assist some 7,500 people injured and some 1,500 families in the

departments of Cochabamba and La Paz. The Ministry of Civil Defence reported that 7,000 hectares of crops and 14,000 animals have been affected. There has also been extensive damage to roads and crop losses of bananas, rice and soybeans.

Source: ECHO

ECUADOR: There are 5,070 people in the Coast affected by floods. At least 1,454 people were evacuated to shelters and homes of relatives. The most flooded areas are located in the lower basin of Guayas.

Source: Government of Ecuador

PERU: Since December 2009, heavy rains have caused flooding and landslides in 17 departments of Peru and left approximately 143,000 people affected. Nearly a third of them has lost their homes and requires health care and shelter. According to official assessments, Cusco is one of the departments with the largest number of people affected (34,730), of whom 18,220 have lost their homes in the districts of Calca, Quispicanchis, Huarcapay and Lucre.⁽¹⁾

The European Commission and IFRC are assisting 5,000 people affected in highly vulnerable areas of the Department of Cusco.⁽²⁾ The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and has allocated €92.800 (US\$ 133.632) to assist the Peruvian Red Cross on their relief operations.⁽³⁾

Source: Government of Peru⁽¹⁾, ECHO⁽²⁾, IFRC⁽³⁾

URUGUAY: According to the National Emergency System more than 2,255 people were evacuated in the departments of Durazno and Soriano due to floods caused by continuous rains.

Source: Government of Uruguay

DROUGHT/FOOD INSECURITY

A drought cause by the El Niño weather effect has reduced water levels reducing crop production and causing severe power shortages in some countries of the region.

EASTERN CARIBBEAN: The Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology (CIHM) in St. James, Barbados, has issued drought alerts for the Eastern Caribbean. From October 2009 to January 2010, the south of Guyana experienced moderate to extremely dry conditions for the four-month period. Saint Lucia, Barbados, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada have been particularly affected. Water levels are dropping quickly in several Caribbean countries, prompting officials to limit availability and impose water restrictions.

At this time drought alerts have been emitted for Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. The unusually dry conditions are also causing bush fires in Trinidad and Saint Lucia, raising concern regarding watershed damage and increased flood risks later in the year.

Guyana is struggling with water shortages and the Minister of Agriculture stated that the resulting losses could be around US\$14.7 million. The Ministry is aiming to minimize losses by ensuring that water is being provided where it is needed. The Minister informed that 10,000 acres of rice land are affected, as well as livestock and other crops. Resources have been mobilized in all the regions and local officials are working closely with farmers to develop a system to respond, address the problem and provide the type of assistance needed in all areas. Since the drought started, the Government has allocated US\$1.2 million in infrastructure works to support farmers countrywide.

Saint Lucia and Trinidad are also rationing water and have alerted the public that they will be affected by water supply shortages.

Source: IFRC

ECUADOR: Lack of rain has affected the province of Carchi, in the north of the country. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAGAP), some 2,500 hectares of crops have been lost completely. Approximately 14,000 people in this province are engaged in cultivation. On 22 February, the Government declared a state of emergency due to the water deficit in this province. The measure is for 60 days. During this time, local authorities must submit projects to assist the affected population.

Source: El Comercio

GUATEMALA: Due to a combination of climatic, economic and sanitation-related factors, nutrition security indicators have worsened in Guatemala, increasing the number of cases of acute malnutrition. Thousands of households are estimated to have been affected by these factors, and are in need of emergency food and nutritional assistance. ⁽¹⁾ The 2009-10 agricultural season was affected by the fact that total aggregate rainfall levels are below the historical average in the central and eastern departments of the country (El Progreso, Baja Verapaz, Jalapa, Jutiapa, Chiquimula and Sacapa in the Corredor Seco).

An appeal will be launched on 5 March to assist 136,000 households. ⁽²⁾

Source: FAO ⁽¹⁾, OCHA ⁽²⁾