



EMERGENCIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

GENERAL OVERVIEW

When compared with the last decade, preliminary data for 2011 shows a decrease in the number of natural disasters and their impact in the Americas. However, the region endured intense disasters during the year. Parts of Brazil were severely flooded several times, causing more than 850 deaths and affecting almost 1.2 million people. In Colombia, floods affected more than 1.3 million people and 207 lives were lost (i).

2011 set a record in terms of economic losses caused by disasters. Global losses are estimated at US\$350 billion, and in Latin America losses exceeded \$22 billion. The global death toll for 2011 from natural disasters is 30,000 people, while in Latin America and the Caribbean that number is approximately 2,000 (ii). The year's most costly disaster, with approximately \$210 billion in losses, was the earthquake and tsunami in Japan in March. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the most costly disaster was Tropical Depression 12-E, with losses of almost \$2 billion (iii).

In Colombia, nearly half of the country's municipalities (500) were impacted by the second rainy season (1 September to 31 December). More than 964,000 people were affected and 180 died (iv).

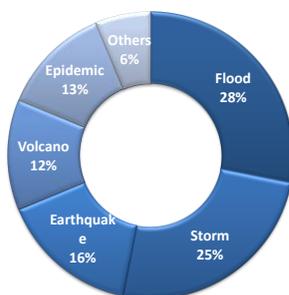
In August, Hurricane Irene caused blackouts, floods and 23 deaths in the United States after passing through Turks and Caicos and the Bahamas. The hurricane directly affected more than 41,000 people (v).

2011 HURRICANE SEASON

The Atlantic hurricane season brought 19 storms and seven hurricanes. Three of those hurricanes reached the major-hurricane category (category 3 and above). Pre-season predictions were accurate in terms of the number of storms (14-19) and hurricanes (7-10). In the Pacific, 13 of the 14 forecasted systems formed, 10 reached hurricane category and five reached major-hurricane categories.

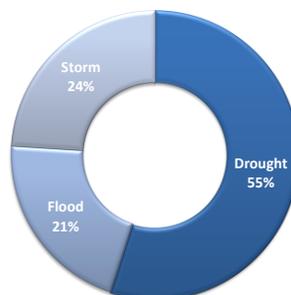
Despite the above-average hurricane activity in 2011, Caribbean countries did not suffer great losses. The last hurricane season to have a major impact in Haiti was in 2008, when 800 people died and 80,000 were affected. Mexico continues to be the country most affected by hurricanes, with 12 systems making landfall in the country during the year. The 2011 Atlantic hurricane season was the sixth most active in the last 25 years (vi).

Natural Disasters
October - December 2011



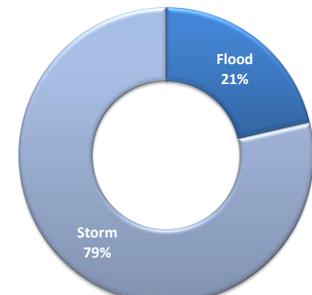
Between October and December 2011, there were 32 natural disaster events, the majority of which were floods. Redhum.

People Affected
October - December 2011



A total of 5.4 million people were affected by disasters between October and December 2011. Redhum.

Economic Impact
October - December 2011



Economic losses from disasters reached \$2.4 billion in the last quarter. Redhum.

TROPICAL DEPRESSION 12-E

Tropical Depression 12-E affected 2.6 million people in six countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Mexico). It caused 117 deaths and losses totalling \$2 billion. El Salvador had the most number of people affected, while Guatemala had the highest number of victims. Central American countries are asking the international community to fulfill its pledges to finance the mitigating effects of climate change. The region is highly vulnerable (vii). Tropical Depression 12-E caused losses of \$2 billion throughout the region, but mitigation received by the affected countries represents only 1 per cent of the amount lost. Guatemala ranks second in the list of countries at greatest risk due to climate change (Bangladesh ranks first) (viii).

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) reports that the region requires approximately \$4.2 billion for reconstruction following damages caused by Tropical Depression 12-E. The evaluation committee indicated the need for new infrastructure due to an increase in the number and intensity of natural disasters.

LESSONS LEARNED

Thirty-five experts from the Regional Risk, Emergency, Disaster Working Group's (REDLAC) member agencies were deployed to several Central American countries during Tropical Depression 12-E. This represents the largest mobilization of REDLAC's human resources since the 2010 Haiti earthquake. In the post-emergency lessons-learned exercises, REDLAC members highlighted the need to maintain and strengthen support for governments and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) with appropriate preparedness and response tools. They also highlighted the need to continue training on the correct use of financial mechanisms, to continue strengthening clusters and to undertake monitoring to ensure that cross-cutting issues, such as protection and HIV/AIDS, are included in disaster response plans.

The United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Catherine Bragg, visited Nicaragua and El Salvador in November to evaluate the humanitarian crisis caused by rains and floods. Mrs. Bragg highlighted that the emergencies had just begun, as affected populations who had lost everything must struggle for their survival over the following months.



The UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mrs. Catherine Bragg, visited areas of Managua, affected by intense rains in October. Mrs. Bragg continued to El Salvador to visit areas affected by Tropical Depression 12-E ©OCHA.

LA NIÑA

The La Niña climatic phenomenon brings strong rains and floods in South America and Asia-Pacific, and droughts in Africa. It emerged at the end of 2011 and is expected to last until early 2012. La Niña is also expected to strengthen to moderate intensity. El Niño, the opposite climatic phenomenon that warms up temperatures in the Pacific, is not expected to appear before April 2012.

BOLIVIA

In Bolivia, authorities allocated \$2.14 million for humanitarian assistance in transportation, logistics and other needs generated by La Niña. Considering affectation levels over the past three years, it is estimated that 36,000 families could be affected between December 2011 and March 2012. There could also be an impact on livelihoods, and sources and use of income. In the last quarter (October to December), the Vice Ministry of Civil Defense recorded natural disaster events in 28 municipalities in eight of the country's nine departments due to La Niña. A total of 530 families were affected and more than 50 houses were destroyed. Farming areas and roads were also damaged.

MEXICO

The most severe drought in the last 70 years is affecting the states of Durango, Zacatecas, Chihuahua, Coahuila and San Luis Potosi in north Mexico, as well as in Texas in the United States. The yearly average rainfall in north Mexico is 540 millimetres, but in 2011 the five above-mentioned states received only 300 millimetres. Authorities report that more than 600,000 families were affected. Farmers lost 900,000 hectares of produce, and 1.7 million farm animals died from lack of water and grazing. This drought is attributed to La Niña. The Government also declared a state of emergency for Durango, Zacatecas and Veracruz due to a cold front towards the end of 2011. Temperatures reached minus 22 ° C in mountainous zones



States affected by the worst drought in 70 years. Annual average rainfall is 540 ml, but in 2011 this region only received 300 ml. Authorities estimate 6 million people were affected. ©OCHA.

RESOLUTION 46/182

TWENTY YEARS OF HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION

Twenty years ago, United Nations Member States reflected on how humanitarian assistance improves the lives of crisis-affected people. The results of this exercise showed deficiencies. This led to the international community renewing its commitment to improve and strengthen assistance mechanisms that were under the direction of the United Nations system. This resulted in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

Resolution 46/182 guides the international humanitarian community in providing assistance in emergency response. The resolution establishes the framework and governing principles for humanitarian assistance. To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the event, the OCHA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, along with OCHA Colombia, held an Internet forum to discuss the scope of the resolution, and the humanitarian community's contributions in assisting people affected by natural disasters and other crises. More than 150 leaders and experts in humanitarian assistance participated in the online event.

Resolution 46/182 is the basis of OCHA's mandate. It establishes coordination tools such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which is an inter-institutional forum for coordination, policy development, and the adoption of decisions regarding humanitarian action between the United Nations and its partners. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the IASC is represented by the REDLAC Working Group.

Other tools established in the resolution were the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). These mechanisms are pillars of the humanitarian system.

MEMBER STATES MISSION

HAITI

Authorities from Norway and OCHA organized a field visit for United Nations Member States interested in gaining a better understanding of the humanitarian system in Haiti. The mission met with various humanitarian organizations and national authorities in Haiti. To help participants understand regional humanitarian coordination, a visit to Panama also was included.

The field mission enabled Member States to:

- Directly observe the added value of multilateral humanitarian activities carried out by the international community, with humanitarian coordination led by the United Nations to support the Government.
- Understand how the Humanitarian Coordinator, OCHA, sector groups and inter-sectarian groups (inter-cluster) coordination works, including

interaction with the national authorities within a context of an integrated mission.

- Understand the impact of CERF at the national level, and consolidated appeals coordinated by the United Nations (CAP and flash appeals).
- Observe how United Nations agencies, NGOs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other agencies work together.



United Nations Member States participated in a field mission to see the advances of humanitarian operations in Haiti. The visit included time in Panama to better understand the scope of regional coordination, in response to the January 2010 earthquake. ©OCHA.

HUMANITARIAN NETWORKS

BOLIVIA AND PERU

Members of Bolivia's HCT participated in the revision of the Peru HCT 2011 work plan and 2012 planning document. They shared experiences and identified similarities that could be replicated in Bolivia. The Bolivian delegation was headed by the Vice Minister of Civil Defense.

Peru's HCT, led by the National Civil Defense Institute (INDECI) and the United Nations system, held two training workshops on the minimum norms for humanitarian response contained in the 2011 Sphere Manual. Participants included professionals and technicians from Government institutions and members from more than 45 civil society institutions.

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- (i) CRED. Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters. www.cred.be/
 - (ii) Swiss Re. <http://www.swissre.com/>.
 - (iii) ECLAC. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.
 - (iv) IDEAM. 'Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies' <http://institucional.ideam.gov.co/jsp/index.jsf>
 - (v) CRED. Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters. www.cred.be/
 - (vi) National Hurricane Center. www.nhc.noaa.gov/
 - (vii) Conference of the United Nations of Durban, 28 November to 9 December 2011. www.cop17-cmp7durban.com/
 - (viii) Conference of the United Nations of Durban, 28 November to 9 December 2011. www.cop17-cmp7durban.com/
 - (ix) Risk, Emergency and Disaster Working Group for Latin America and the Caribbean.
 - (x) Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) <http://bit.ly/8URKL>.
 - (xi) Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) <http://bit.ly/8URKL>.
 - (xii) Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) <http://bit.ly/twJ7HA>.
 - (xiii) Sphere Project. Humanitarian Letter and Minimum Norms in Humanitarian Response. www.sphereproject.org/sphere/es/acerca/.