

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
FOR THE COORDINATION OF
HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS



OCHA-Geneva
Palais des Nations
CH 1211 Geneva 10
Telephone : +41 22 917 12 34
Facsimile: +41 22 917 00 23

24-hour Emergency Duty System
Number: +41 22 917 20 10

"This year has been a year like no other for humanitarian action, bracketed by devastating disasters, --the Indian Ocean Tsunami in the final days of 2004 and the South Asia earthquake of October 2005, on top of the worst hurricane season in living memory--and stretching all humanitarian agencies to their maximum capacity and beyond." (*Introduction of Humanitarian Appeals 2006- 30 November 2005*)



IRIN photo gallery

South Asia Earthquake 8 October 2005



IRIN photo gallery

On Saturday 8 October 2005, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake occurred in Northern Pakistan, its epicenter situated just 95 km. of Islamabad. The initial earthquake and the over 300 aftershocks caused massive destruction in the area and more than 73,000 dead and 69,000 seriously injured. It also affected India and Afghanistan.

Some 2.5 million people are now living in tents or in emergency or transitional shelters below 5000ft. There are still 350,000 - 400,000 people living at higher elevations.

According to the Government, currently there are 502 camps in North West Frontier Province and Pakistan Administered Kashmir with a total population of 187,506. Out of the camps, 30 are planned camps with a population of 36,000 people and are supported by the camp management cluster.

Out of 2.5 million people in need of food assistance, 1 million are covered by WFP, 1.5 million by the Government and 150,000 by ICRC.

Winter is testing the capacity of the humanitarian community. The first significant snow and rainfalls of the year came in at the beginning of January. Tents collapsed under snowfalls affecting both the earthquake-hit populations and relief organizations. The reaction to very bad weather conditions in the first days of January was generally good, but additional unexpected snow below 5000 ft. created serious problems. The response included the prompt distribution of food, tents and blankets. Mortality levels did not increase as a result of this situation but respiratory infection did as temperature dropped. At present, the priorities of the humanitarian community remain: winterized tents, iron sheets, and heating in family and communal tents.

Funding

Committed contributions to the UN Flash Appeal, have reached US\$ 311 million (56%) out of the US\$550 million requested.

AMERICAS

Hurricane Season in America



IFRC photo : I. Toledo, A. Uralde, Ma. Sotolongo, J. González

The 2005 Atlantic Hurricane Season was the most intense on record. It not only produced the highest number of tropical storms (26), but also the highest number

of hurricanes (13) and the biggest number of category V hurricanes, the highest on the Saffir-Simpson scale. It also registered the strongest on record, hurricane 'Wilma'.



IFRC photo : I. Toledo, A. Uralde, Ma. Sotolongo, J. González

2005 will remain in the record books as the costliest, deadliest, strongest and longest hurricane season ever recorded in Central and North America. The rest of the continent was relatively spared.

When the 2005 hurricane season was over, 26 named tropical storms had been reported in the Atlantic, beginning with Arlene and continuing through Wilma. And for the first year, the Greek alphabet had to be used: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta and Epsilon were all named storms. This record was reinforced by the fact that 13 storms became hurricanes against 12 in 1969, for the previous historical record.

The strongest hurricane this year, in terms of pressure, was Wilma even if the one that everybody remembers is Hurricane **Katrina**, the worst natural disaster in the United States. Katrina, a category 5 hurricane, caused at least USD 80 billion in damages and over 1,300 deaths.

More than 30,000 people remain displaced in temporary shelters in Honduras, in the wake of tropical storm **Gamma**, the 24th named storm of the official 2005 Atlantic

hurricane season, and the last to cause significant damage in the Americas. Thirty-four deaths have been attributed to Gamma, which brought heavy rain to the Caribbean coast of Honduras from 18 to 20 November. Overall, some 90,000 people have been affected by the storm, which caused significant damage in six departments of Honduras already suffering the effects of hurricanes Wilma and Beta.

Responding to a request for international assistance, the United Nations country team in Honduras has dispatched five inter-agency teams to undertake damage assessments, in collaboration with local authorities and non-governmental organizations. The World Food Programme (WFP) has distributed nearly 200,000 family rations, and is planning to provide an additional 1750 metric tonnes of food in two departments for the next three months. Spain, the United States and Japan have also responded with financial or in-kind assistance, as has done the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Hurricane **Dennis**, which struck Haiti and Cuba in July, caused more than 30 deaths. Katrina, which twice made landfall in the United States - in Florida and the Gulf Coast - caused at least 1300 deaths and has been recognized as one of the largest natural disasters in United States history. **Stan** provoked severe flooding and mudslides across Central America, causing at least 1500 deaths in six countries and prompting the United Nations to launch humanitarian appeals for Guatemala and El Salvador. Wilma lingered for days over Mexico's Yucatan peninsula before moving east to affect Haiti, Jamaica, and Cuba and wreak large-scale destruction in Florida. Tropical storm Alpha led to flooding in Haiti, resulting in 20 deaths, while hurricane Beta caused extensive damage in Nicaragua.

Hurricane Stan -- the eighteenth named storm and tenth hurricane of the record-breaking 2005 Atlantic hurricane season -- made landfall over southern Mexico on 4 October as a category 1 storm. Originally it appeared to be a relatively modest storm; however, the heavy rains it brought to

southern Mexico and Central America caused extensive flooding and landslides, leading to more than 1500 fatalities in six countries. Nearly one month later, nearly 32,000 displaced persons in Guatemala and more than 15,000 in El Salvador remain unable to return to their homes. Moreover, those who have sought refuge in emergency shelters represent only the tip of the iceberg in this emergency; most of the displaced are staying with friends and family, and it is not easy for international assistance to reach them.

The emergency caused by hurricane Stan had its heaviest impact on the most vulnerable populations in Central America, leaving them in an extremely precarious humanitarian situation for months to come. Initial damage estimates in Guatemala amount to more than \$400 million, while in El Salvador, where the hurricane coincided with the eruption of one of the country's largest volcanoes, crop damage alone has been estimated at \$10 million.

In the storm's aftermath, both Governments requested international assistance for humanitarian relief and reconstruction, prompting the United Nations to launch a \$24 million Flash Appeal for Guatemala, and the country team in El Salvador to call for \$13.7 million. United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams were dispatched to both countries in the hurricane's wake, and OCHA released emergency cash grants for both El Salvador and Guatemala. An emergency grant was also extended to Costa Rica.

During 2005, four emergency response UNDAC missions were deployed to the following countries: Guyana, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. In March, an UNDAC evaluation mission, requested by the Dominican Republic authorities, was sent to Santo Domingo in order to assess the National Emergency Agency (CNE) and to make recommendations to strengthen the weakest areas identified by the team.

In October, the Regional Office in Panama played a key role in facilitating the deployments of UNDAC teams to Guatemala and El Salvador, the two most

affected countries hit by Hurricane Stan. The Head of Regional Office was deployed to both countries to assist the settling-in of the UNDAC teams and to support UN Resident Coordinators in emergency coordination efforts.

Later in October, another UNDAC mission was deployed to Nicaragua to support UN agencies as well as national authorities in managing the disaster situation caused by Hurricane Beta. For the second time in the region, the team was deployed two days before the disaster occurred. The regional coordination mechanisms can be considered as global pioneers, since pre-disaster deployments only happened before in Jamaica, in 2004, for Hurricane Ivan. **Beta** affected the most vulnerable populations located in the Atlantic Coastal area of Nicaragua but the response was well managed.

Although Stan affected badly Mexico, - claiming 2,000 lives in Mexico and Central America -, there was no request to have an UNDAC team deployed to that country. Nevertheless, the Regional Office maintained close contact with the UN Resident coordinator in Mexico.

The Regional Office monitored the path of Hurricane Wilma, a category 5 storm that affected Jamaica, Haiti, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Honduras, Belize, the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico, Florida, Bahamas and even the Atlantic coast of Canada. However, none of the Governments of these countries did request UNDAC teams.

When Wilma made landfall, it killed four people in Mexico, twelve in Haiti, one in Jamaica and was blamed for 14 deaths in Florida. In Mexico's famous tourist-oriented Caribbean coastline of Yucatan, including the resort city of Cancun, and its offshore islands damage was estimated by Mexican insurance companies to be the country's most costly disaster ever, with payments topping the US\$1.2 billion the industry paid out.

Cash grants were mobilized for the Office of the Resident Coordinator in Panama for severe floods occurred in January 2005

affecting Bocas del Toro province and to the Office of the Resident Coordinator in Costa Rica, after severe floods that occurred in the northeastern coast of Costa Rica, close to the Panamanian border, due to heavy rains. Following Hurricane Stan Cash Grants were allocated to Guatemala and El Salvador. Besides, two Flash Appeals were launched for Stan: one for 22 million USD for the response in Guatemala and another appeal for 7 million USD for El Salvador.

Two volcanic eruptions occurred during the year 2005 in the region. One was the eruption of Volcán Santa Ana in El Salvador, almost at the same time that Hurricane Stan hit the country in October. Another eruption was registered, in Colombia where Volcán Galeras erupted in November. Several tremors were registered in the Andean region, however only one earthquake, occurred in Chile in June, causing major damage.

OCHA mission in El Salvador - response coordination and preparedness strengthening

In October 2005, El Salvador was strongly hit by two convergent and simultaneous disasters, tropical Storm Stan and volcanic eruption of one of the country's largest volcano, Ilamatepec. Each of the two emergencies, alone, which affected half of the country, forced more than 72,000 people for a considerable period of time in emergency shelters, killed 72 and caused economic damage amounting to USD 355,6 million, would over-tax the national emergency systems.

OCHA Geneva deployed a senior desk officer, to San Salvador from 9 November to 8 December 2005 to provide support to UN Resident Coordinator and UN-Disaster Management Team in coordinating implementation of several relief projects funded from OCHA, Norway and OPEC emergency grants, ensuring adequate follow-up to the UN Joint Flash Appeal and developing policy papers aiming to strengthen disaster response preparedness capacities, including elaboration of the work plan. The mission

also identified major lessons learned from the hurricane Stan response/preparedness activities and consolidated them into a background document for the upcoming Regional Ministerial Meeting on Hurricanes, scheduled for February/March 2006 in Guatemala under the Emergency Relief Coordinator's chairmanship. Promotion of this important event and the selection of key participants were carried out with several cabinet members. Maintaining the momentum, OCHA mission assisted the Government and the UN Resident Coordinator in program development and promotion of the national seminar on "Strengthening of Coordination between the government of El Salvador the UN Country Team in disaster risk management". The national seminar should serve as preparatory platform for a Guatemala Ministerial Meeting on the subject.

During the mission, coordination meetings and individual consultations were held with the Heads and members of all UN agencies participating in the UN Joint Flash Appeal, UN Disaster Management team, UN Emergency Technical Team, NGOs, donors and governmental institutions. To ensure a high profile of the OCHA coordination and preparedness action, several senior level meetings were held, including those with the Vice-President, the Chief of Presidential Administration, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister and Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Under-Secretary of State in the Presidency Office and the key member of the national parliament.

The mission proposed the following main recommendations: Continue early recovery support to El Salvador through response preparedness activities. Deploy OCHA consultant to El Salvador to ensure integration of disaster preparedness in early recovery activities. Use the policy documents prepared by OCHA mission as background for the Ministerial Conference in Guatemala. Explore feasibility of OCHA participation in the future Inter-Agency Damage Assessment Missions led by ECLAC.



ReliefWeb Map

AFRICA

Comoros, Karthala Volcano Eruption 24 November 2005

The Karthala Volcano has been in eruption since 24 November. The eruption began with projections of ashes and smoke, which spilled volcanic debris over extensive areas of the Grande Comore Island. Concerns exist over the availability of potable water, and the impact of pollution by volcanic debris on public health facilities, agriculture and livestock for approximately 245,000 people living in 76 villages in the areas exposed to ashes and smoke. Ashes have covered a significant part of the agricultural crops in the villages.

The authorities launched an emergency plan to distribute potable water to affected populations, clean streets and public facilities from volcanic debris. In this respect, they have requested support from international partners and local organizations. The UN Resident Coordinator coordinates UN support to the government. The OCHA Regional Office for Southern Africa is maintaining regular contact with the Resident Coordinator in order to determine additional coordination support needs.

Central African Republic Floods 7 September 2005



OCHA field office picture

The United Nations system rushed aid to the Central African Republic (CAR), following devastating August floods that

swept the capital, Bangui, ruining over 2,500 homes and affecting nearly 20,000 people. After appealing to individual donor countries for funds in response to the crisis, OCHA released an emergency grant of nearly \$18,000 for the country.

ASIA AND PACIFIC

China Typhoon 5 September 2005

On 4 September, Typhoon Talim weakened into a tropical storm and landed on China, where it triggered flooding and landslides. A total of 129 persons were killed and 30 missing. Approximately 102,000 rooms collapsed and 278,000 damaged. Some 1.84 million people were evacuated.

India Floods 21 September 2005

Heavy rains from two major low pressures pounded coastal areas of India and Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal. Reportedly, at least 33 people were killed in Southern India and 16 fishermen are thought to be dead in Bangladesh.

Vietnam Floods 26 September 2005

On 26 September, Typhoon Damrey, the most vigorous in the last 10 years, affected all coastal provinces from Quang Ninh to Quang Nam and Da Nang. 59 people died. The total death toll by Damrey in the Philippines, China and Viet Nam reached at least 90.

The storm surges broke several sea dykes despite great local preventative efforts. Before the dykes broke, the second evacuation of people took place, increasing the total number of evacuated people to nearly 600,000.

The seawater penetrated inland 3-4 km in coastal provinces and, following flash floods in the areas, have destroyed at least 1,194 houses and damaged 11,576 houses. More than 130,000 ha of rice

fields have been submerged, most of which was due for harvest.

OCHA released USD 50,000 emergency grant for emergency response coordination in Viet Nam.

India Floods 27 October 2005

A deep depression developed over southwestern Bay of Bengal and intensified into a cyclonic depression. Under its influence, widespread heavy rainfall with strong wind claimed more than 100 people in five days. Around 50,000 people were evacuated.

China Earthquake 26 November 2005

The 5.7 magnitude earthquake occurred on 26 November in the southern part of China. In Jiangxi and Hubei Province, 13 persons were killed, 8,162 people were injured, and about 608,000 people were evacuated as well as about 20,000 rooms collapsed and 156,000 damaged.

Vanuatu Volcanic eruption 27 November 2005

Mt. Ambae in Vanuatu erupted on 27 November. Volcanic tremors continue to occur but the level of activity is moderate. As of 12 December, no casualties have been reported but about 12- 15 villages with a total population of about 5,000 are affected. Villagers are moving to ten relocation centers in the island.

Philippine Floods 9 December 2005

Continuous heavy rains, induced by monsoon season, affected the central part of Philippine.

A total of 42,843 families (192,946 persons) have been affected by the flooding. As of 9 December, 1,399 families (6,995 persons) are still staying in eight evacuation centers and four persons were

reported to have lost lives due to landslides.

EUROPE AND MIDDLE EAST

Qeshm Earthquake Iran 27 November 2005

A 5.9 magnitude earthquake occurred in the Persian Gulf island of Qeshm in northern Iran. 17, 510 people were affected, and 8 people died, and 100 were injured in Qeshm. 2,600 buildings have been affected, of which 50 are schools (comprises of up to 60 percent of the schools in the area, of which a third are destroyed) and four out of nine (UNICEF supported) early child-care centers are destroyed. There is severe structural damage in the villages and medical/health supplies are low due to the fact that one of the two hospitals on the island is destroyed and other is over capacity.

The United Nations Disaster Management Team in Iran was on alert since first hours of the disaster.

The United Nations was in constant contact with the government of Iran with updates. The UN RC a.i., on behalf of the UN system in Iran, on the second day of the disaster submitted a letter of sympathy to the Government, offering the UN's assistance. Although the Government of Iran issued no official request for assistance, the UNDMT decided to dispatch a team of experts to assess the damages.

Regional Disaster Preparedness in Central Asia: Workshop in Kazakhstan 1-4 November 2005

Due to the diversity of landscape relief, climate conditions and industrial infrastructure, Central Asian countries are subject to a wide variety of natural and technological disasters. Capitals and major cities such as Tashkent, Almaty, Ashkabad were, in the past, devastated by major earthquakes. A possible overflow of a natural dam in Lake Sarez (Tajikistan) could affect millions of people in four

countries. Floods, landslides, earth tremors and avalanches are, unfortunately, common events, and radioactive waste represents a major threat.

Regional cooperation to facilitate early warning and to reduce the consequences of catastrophes is a must among these countries that share a similar cultural heritage but also an interdependent access to natural resources and risks. Hence, the Government of Kazakhstan, with the support of UNDP, ISDR and OCHA, took the initiative of convening a regional workshop of representatives from governments and Red Crescent Societies and the Russian Federation in Astana, capital of Kazakhstan, from 1 to 4 November 2005, to exchange information, to establish collaboration on disaster management and to test regional capacities to face a major earthquake. The meeting was attended by over 50 participants from Ministries of Emergencies/Red Crescent of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan plus Russia) as well as UNDP, ISDR, OCHA, the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre and USAID.

The Astana workshop took place in the premises of a regional disaster coordination centre, which the Kazakhstan Government plans to establish, with state-of-the-art technology and communications. Less than one month earlier (12-14 October 2005), it had been the turn of United Nations country teams from the same Central Asian countries to meet in Almaty in the wake of the South Asian earthquake, in order to review inter-Agency collaboration and preparedness in case a similar disaster was to hit the region.

ISDR

Internationally renowned aerial photographer, Yann Arthus Bertrand, joins forces with the ISDR to promote disaster risk reduction



ISDR photo

In collaboration with renowned aerial photographer, Yann Arthus Bertrand, the ISDR secretariat has prepared a calendar on showing human vulnerability to disasters. The calendar was launched in Geneva in November 2005, with the presence of Jan Egeland, UN Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator. Yann Arthus Bertrand will continue to collaborate with ISDR on communications initiatives, promoting disaster risk reduction at the international level. The calendar was produced in partnership with the private entity ENTICO that sought sponsorship from public and private sources for the project.

Pakistan

In Pakistan, the ISDR secretariat and its partners are working closely with the Government, Universities, Associations of Architects and engineers to promote safe building standards in the recovery efforts. For more information contact Praveen Pardeshi at Pardeshi@un.org

2005 figures on natural disasters: More than 133 million people affected

ISDR and the Belgium-based Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) will release the official figures for the number of disasters, people affected and killed during 2005. Professor Debarati Sapir from CRED and ISDR Director, Salvano Briceno will present the figures during a press conference on Monday 30 January at the Palais des Nations, in Geneva. (Room 1. 11am). CRED in association with the ISDR intends to release these specific disaster related figures at the beginning of every year.

| Disaster Type | Occurrence | Deaths | Total affected |
|---------------------|------------|--------|----------------|
| Drought | 19 | 59 | 15,373,000 |
| Earthquake | 22 | 76,823 | 3,782,651 |
| Epidemic | 39 | 2,604 | 86,676 |
| Extreme Temperature | 25 | 608 | 596 |
| Flood | 164 | 4,515 | 58,043,977 |
| Slides | 12 | 609 | 7,502 |
| Volcano | 6 | - | 260,000 |
| Wild Fires | 10 | 22 | 5,277 |
| Wind Storm | 112 | 4,038 | 55,677,437 |
| | 409 | 89,278 | 133,237,116 |

Source: EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database-www.em-dat.net – Université Catholique de Louvain – Brussels – Belgium.

From: January to 31 December 2005

OCHA involvement in 2005:

89 natural disasters
32 International Appeals launched
More than 241 Situation Reports issued

Contact: Elizabeth Byrs , e-mail address: byrs@un.org

More information can be found on Relief Web, OCHA on line, and IRIN websites:

www.reliefweb.int
<http://ochaonline.un.org>
www.irinnews.org