

Colombia

Floods and Mudslides in Mocoa, Colombia.

San Salvador, April 4th 2017

1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

During the early hours of April 1st, 130 mm of rain fell in the city of Mocoa in southwest Colombia, causing the flooding of the Mocoa, Mulato, and Sangoyaco Rivers, and several mudslides throughout Mocoa, pushing several feet of mud and rocks onto buildings and roads in the capital of southwestern Putumayo Department. According to OCHA, at least 254 people have died, (out of them 48 are children); 203 wounded; 220 disappeared and numbers continue to grow as the hours pass; 500 families and 17 neighbourhoods have been affected. The death toll is likely to increase: 22 wounded people are in critical condition, and it is believed that the majority of the missing people are dead. The Government declared a state of emergency for the region.

According to the authorities the infrastructure has been largely impacted: the urban electricity network, the aqueduct and the sewage infrastructure have been affected, the city at this time has no electricity or water supply. In addition to the above, access by road is difficult as the avalanche destroyed 7 bridges and other roads, the telecommunications network was affected by the emergency. The consolidation of the population census continues, and the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance is expected to grow. More rainfall is probable in the next two days, which may cause more mudslides and aggravate the situation.

2. Why is an ACT response needed?

A state of emergency was declared in the affected area, although the Government has been able to respond to the emergency focusing into the rescue activities while humanitarian needs are still being analysed, ACT Colombia Forum sees an added value in providing humanitarian assistance and early recovery activities to the most vulnerable populations that are many times invisible and not reached by the official assistance.

3. National and international response

Many INGOs, have already deployed teams to the affected areas, China donated USD 1 million and the Inter-American Development Bank USD 200,000 in relief funds to the Colombian government. The UN, as well as countries such as France, Peru and Venezuela, have promised to send relief aid to Colombia. The National Disaster Risk Unit is supporting local authorities in search and rescue activities, as well as providing humanitarian assistance as per government standards. However, many people still lack access to any humanitarian assistance. Coordination activities, led by OCHA, are taking place between the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), the Local Coordination Team (ELC), while the National System for Disaster Risk Reduction, composed of government agencies, are coordinating the assistance plan for the affected population. Caritas Colombia (Pastoral Social) has presence in the local and national crisis room.

4. ACT Alliance response

The ACT Forum is coordinating joint actions with the partners in the area as well as with other humanitarian actors. LWF is coordinating with its partner Caritas Colombia on WASH, Food, Shelter and Livelihoods. DKH is working in coordination with Corporacion Infancia y Desarrollo (CID) focusing their assistance on protection and psychosocial assistance. DKH has provided an initial grant of 5,000 euro, which allowed CID to recruit 2 additional psychologists/protection officers, who have started to support ICBF (the child protection agency of the state) to offer assistance on Sunday the 2nd of April. The assistance includes as well solar lamps, to provide a more secure environment in the shelters. Christian Aid is supporting its partner Commission Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz. All partner organizations have permanent presence in the affected region and have access to the most affected population in need.

5. Planned activities

Christian Aid, DKH and LWF are planning to scale up their emergency assistance, and depending on the capacity of the authorities to provide assistance and restore livelihoods, ACT forum will consider in engaging early recovery activities. Member organizations will send humanitarian staff to support the implementing partners (including the provision of emergency equipment) to the affected region as needs are being defined.

6. Constraints

Teams on the field are still counting the number of people affected and infrastructure destroyed or damaged, exact number of casualties reported is conflicting among responding agencies, there is a lack of specific information on sectoral needs. On the other side the electoral campaigns are already taking place and how this will affect the humanitarian assistance. Coordination with the government and its plan to deliver assistance as needs persist.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to the Head of Finance and Administration, Line Hempel (Line.Hempel@actalliance.org) and Senior Finance Officer, Lorenzo Correa (Lorenzo.Correa@actalliance.org).

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