



Central America & Mexico

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

The European Commission's humanitarian aid funding:

€199 million in humanitarian aid since 1994

€68.6 million for targeted Disaster Risk Reduction since 1998

Total European Commission's humanitarian aid to Central America and Mexico in 2014: €11.6 million

ECHO is the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department.

Through ECHO funding, nearly 150 million people are helped each year in more than 80 countries outside the EU through approximately 200 partners (International non-governmental organisations, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, and UN agencies).

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Drill tests local emergency response in Nicaragua, as part of a disaster preparedness project.
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Key messages

- Natural hazards such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, hurricanes, landslides and droughts impact the region frequently. The European Commission has provided humanitarian assistance such as temporary shelter, food, clean water and proper sanitation in all the major crises that have impacted the region in the past 20 years.
- Levels of vulnerability to disasters are extremely high also due to unplanned urbanisation, climate change, widespread poverty and violence.
- In order to tackle these challenges, disaster Risk Reduction is a priority. Approximately one third of the European Commission's humanitarian assistance to this region has been channeled to projects enabling vulnerable communities to identify risks, take measures to reduce them and be better prepared to respond to natural hazards.
- The European Commission is one of the few donors addressing the humanitarian consequences of collective violence in Mexico and the Northern Triangle of Central America (El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala).

Humanitarian situation and needs

Central America and Mexico are highly exposed to a wide variety of natural hazards such as floods, hurricanes, landslides and droughts, which impact the region on a recurrent basis. Due to its location in the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire, the region is prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Rapid unplanned urbanisation and the effects of climate change add to vulnerability, and when disasters strike, the poorest communities are usually the most affected. Droughts are frequent and their effects include significant losses of subsistence crops, livestock and forestry, with a direct impact on the nutrition and livelihoods of the population. This happens in a context of deep inequalities and widespread poverty and some countries suffer from extremely high levels of violence resulting from organized crime and gangs.

When a disaster hits the region, the most pressing needs are usually temporary shelter, food, clean water and proper sanitation, primary health care, basic relief items, as well as hygiene promotion (to prevent waterborne diseases), infrastructure repairs and assistance to recover from agricultural or livestock losses.

With such a high level of vulnerability, empowering communities to prepare for and respond to natural hazards is a major need. This is done through the Disaster Preparedness programme (DIPECHO) of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection Department (ECHO). DIPECHO focuses on strengthening the capacities of local communities and of institutions involved in disaster risk reduction and management. Activities include providing early warning systems, education and awareness campaigns, training, and small infrastructure works to reduce risks. These simple and inexpensive preparatory measures, implemented by communities themselves, enable them to save their own lives and livelihoods in emergencies.

The European Union's Humanitarian Response

Since 1994, the European Commission has allocated **€199 million** in humanitarian aid to Central America and México. Of this, 66% (€131 million) was used to respond to emergencies: floods, droughts, epidemics, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, internal displacements and the humanitarian consequences of organized violence.

Main operations funded in the last years:

In **2011**, ECHO allocated **€4 million** to El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua to assist the population affected by **Tropical Depression 12-E**. In November **2012**, ECHO responded to a 7.2 magnitude **earthquake** that hit Guatemala, killing more than 40 people and causing damage in 10 departments. ECHO provided **€1.65 million** to assist more than 10,000 people with blankets, hygiene articles, cooking utensils, food aid, emergency health, water and sanitation.

In **2013**, ECHO allocated a total of **€2.8 million for humanitarian relief**.

Assistance went to the population affected by the **coffee-rust plague**, ensuring the food security of some 2,000 people (400 families) in Guatemala, affected populations received seeds to support family farming and cash for work programmes (€300 000). Funds were also used to respond to the worst **dengue** epidemic since 2008 in Honduras and Mexico: €500,000 was allocated to support 114,000 people and to strengthen local health services in areas where -due to the high levels of violence- the authorities had difficulty in accessing. ECHO also allocated **€2 million** to respond to the **humanitarian consequences of the intensification of collective violence**. With only 2% of the world's population, this region accounts for 18% of homicides worldwide. At 90.4 homicides per 100 000 people, Honduras is the **most violent country in the world**. El Salvador (41.2 per 100,000) and Guatemala (39.9 per 100,000) have higher homicide rates now than during their civil wars in the 80s. According to the 2014 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), homicidal violence in the Northern Triangle results in considerably more civilian casualties than in most countries, including some with ongoing armed conflicts or war, such as DRC (28.3 homicides per 100,000 persons in 2012) and Afghanistan (6.5 per 100,000 in 2012). Access to basic services is hindered by armed groups, and also affects the delivery of humanitarian aid.



Reducing the impact of natural hazards

Since 1998 the European Union has invested **€68.6 million** (34% of total funds in the region) to prepare communities to face extreme natural phenomena. The **2014-2015 DIPECHO programme** grants **€10.7 million** for disaster preparedness activities benefiting 500 000 people in Central America. In addition, in 2014 ECHO also provided **€750 000** in response to the food insecurity situation that has affected Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, and **€176 308** to assist people in earthquake affected areas of Nicaragua. **The total contribution for 2014 is €11.6 million.**

As part of the Disaster Risk Reduction efforts, **€3.5 million** has been allocated in the last four years in the so-called Dry Corridor (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua) to strengthen the **resilience of communities exposed to droughts**, a recurrent phenomenon in the region.



Disaster preparedness pays off and **saves lives**, as many experiences demonstrate in this region. On 10 April 2014 an earthquake of 6.2 degrees hit Nicaragua. Preparedness actions carried out through DIPECHO programmes enabled the Local Response Brigades (BRILOR) to respond rapidly and evacuate people from areas at risk to safe zones. Julia Montoya, one of the BRILOR coordinators in Managua said: *"The training we received really helped us. After the earthquake, I activated our family plan and evacuated my family to the safe zone. Then I met with the BRILOR members and we visited the most critical sectors evacuating families. We set up the command post in the sports field, according to the response plan we developed during the training we received in the project. Had we not been prepared, it would have been a disaster, because we would not have known what to do."*



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