



# World Food Programme

## Latin America and the Caribbean: Emergency Preparedness and Response

When disaster strikes, the World Food Programme leads in providing life-saving assistance. Victims of natural disasters can lose everything in seconds, and a timely response makes the difference between recovery and prolonged suffering. Therefore, when governments request assistance during an emergency, WFP supports immediate relief efforts with rapid needs assessment, pre-positioned food, and expert response teams.

### Emergency Preparedness

Between 2003 and 2013, natural disasters in the Americas and the Caribbean left an estimated 250,000 dead and affected 70 million people (OCHA). Recurrent disasters, often minor and with low international visibility, affect poor rural livelihoods, exacerbate socio-economic inequalities and hamper the solution to basic social challenges.

In a region often hit with such "silent" emergencies, preparedness activities including contingency planning, training and strengthening of technical capacities are especially vital. To ensure readiness in response to such disasters, it is crucial that WFP staff in all LAC country and sub-offices are prepared to provide timely and effective support for national governments'

response and to ensure prompt coordination with the humanitarian networks within each country.

Toward this end, WFP is rolling out several projects that simultaneously ensure WFP staff preparedness and benefit government counterparts and partners. Activities include risk identification and analysis, simulation exercises, coordination and revision of emergency procedures, early warning strengthening, and information management.

### August 2013: Heavy rains affect thousands in Nicaragua

In August 2013, incessant and heavy rains caused flooding in the South and North Atlantic Autonomous regions (RAAS and RAAN). According to a summary report shared by the national civil protection agency, an estimated 3,900 families were evacuated into temporary shelters, although many more were affected. WFP responded with immediate food assistance for 7,950 families for 15 days in the RAAS and Rio San Juan and 30 days in RAAN.



Nicaragua



Colombia



Haiti



Bolivia



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**January 2014: Flooding in Bolivia**  
WFP to provide food assistance to 9,000 families by the end of May



**October 2012: Response to Hurricane Sandy**  
WFP provided food to assist over 750,000 people in three eastern provinces of Cuba, as well as in Haiti.

## Risk Identification, Assessment and Early Warning

In order to plan appropriately for emergencies, WFP must identify vulnerable areas and populations before a disaster strikes. To accomplish this goal, WFP employs a variety of tools to determine the underlying causes and aggravating factors of vulnerability in order to determine beneficiaries for future intervention, including:

- Integrated context analyses identifying food-insecure areas that are prone to disasters
- Daily Emergency Updates covering Latin America and the Caribbean.
- SATCAweb, an early warning web platform that provides disaster related information to the public, managed in partnership with CEPREDENAC.

Early Warning allows for effective planning, design and implementation of activities that address food insecurity in risk-prone areas.

## Emergency Response

The primary goal of food assistance is *to save lives*. As such, WFP intervenes when a situation surpasses government capacities to respond. During the first few days after a shock, WFP draws up a rapid needs assessment and offers emergency food assistance upon government requests—this can be in the form of cash and vouchers if food is available on the market.

WFP acts with the aim of *protecting livelihoods* and fulfilling the *nutritional needs* of vulnerable populations. In order to support the entire disaster cycle, other WFP LAC programmes focus on assisting communities to build resilience, reduce disaster risk, and adapt to climate change.

An additional Developing Emergency Preparedness and Response Capacities programme works to strengthen institutional capacities as part of a long-term goal to increase government ownership of emergency preparedness and response in Latin America.

In March 2014, WFP received DFID funding for four Central American countries (El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala & Nicaragua) in order to further strengthen WFP's internal EPR capacity during the first 72 hours after an emergency. The funding, also issued to UNICEF, promotes interagency cooperation as a component of the project. The project will enhance WFP's response capabilities in the areas of early warning, logistics, nutrition in emergencies, ICT in emergencies, cash transfer methodology, and rapid needs assessment through specific technical assistance and trainings.

## January 2014: Flooding Affects 325,000 people in Bolivia

This year's rainy season in southern Bolivia proved especially destructive. From January through May, serious floods affected 325,000 people in several provinces. In view of the magnitude of the emergency, WFP approved a budget increase of almost US\$4 million to its current emergency response operation in Bolivia. This increase enabled WFP to provide food assistance to families in the 25 most flood-affected municipalities in the Departments of La Paz, Beni, Cochabamba and Pando. 9,000 families will be assisted by the end of May 2014.

WFP is working through General Food Distributions and Food for Asset activities. Some main roads remain under water and boats are often needed to transport the food assistance.

In addition WFP began food and nutritional security evaluations in the flood-affected areas and will provide technical support to the Ministry of Rural Development and Lands in the preparation of a food security rehabilitation strategy within the Patujú Plan for Rehabilitation and Disasters Prevention.



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