

**Dear Friends of SHARE,**

El Salvador is currently under a red alert throughout the country as a result of Tropical Storm Stan, which has caused torrential downpours, threatening to overflow dams on the largest rivers in the country, provoking flash flooding across the country. The flooding has caused landslides, road closures and the evacuation of thousands throughout the country. At least forty four people have been killed as a result of this and the volcanic eruption (described below) including two from communities associated with the Association of Communities Affected by the Beltway (ACAP).

ACAP is one of SHARE's advocacy partners. They are currently presenting a letter, along with UNES, to the Legislative Assembly asking the government to suspend all highway work while the rains continue. UNES (The Salvadoran Ecological Unit) also asked the Legislative Assembly today to stop construction of la Finca El Espino- an area with many commercial centers and where plans are to build a new golf course and more urban activities. They are concerned that this construction will cause more deadly mudslides.

The government also called a red alert warning after Ilimatepec Volcano erupted Sunday night. This eruption caused showers of ash, mud flows, sulfur and volcanic igneous rock over many communities. Many coffee crops have also been destroyed in Ahuachapán. SHARE's new local development area is in Ahuachapán and Santa Ana, within the municipalities of Chalchuapa and Atiquizaya. Chalchuapa is facing both the effects of the volcano, as described above, as well as the overflowing of the Chiquito River and landslides from the tropical storm.

One of the regions hardest hit by the rains is the Lower Lempa in San Vicente. In this area there has been little support by the central government and the municipal government has run out of funds to evacuate communities- and there are many more communities that will need to evacuate. More details are below about the situation in San Vicente. **If you would like to contribute to fundraising efforts to help communities in the Lower Lempa area to evacuate** and access water, food, blankets and other basic needs, please send a check of support to the **SHARE Foundation**, earmarked for **Emergency Fund**.

**598 Bosworth Street, #1  
San Francisco, CA, 94131**

Below are some accounts collected on the impacts these two natural disasters are having on communities where our grassroots base partners. Please keep our sisters and brothers in El Salvador in your heart, prayers and meditations as they face these harsh living condition that add extra burden to the everyday struggle for survival.

**Maria Madre de los Pobres** (communication with Church Secretary, Sandra Gonzalez and Padre Daniel)

Yesterday morning there was a significant mudslide and a wall came down, over the main road where the No. 8 bus route passes. Approximately 30 families, living in homes below, have been evacuated to community centers and also to the Recreational Center.

An investigation team was out traveling through the expansive parish area and assessing damage, especially in the areas near the railroad line, near the river, and near ravines. Further evacuations may have also taken place, or may follow.

Over the course of the night/early morning there was another mudslide, this time just behind the parish in the community La Laboral. The emergency teams and parish council members were in this community urging them to evacuate yesterday. Most did not leave. A family was buried in the mudslide; workers are still uncovering the bodies. So far 3 have been uncovered. There are a total of 4 to 6 estimated to have been covered and killed by the mudslide. Many other families who had stayed in the community began to leave when the mudslide began. Many people were uncovered in time by fellow community members in the flight out of the community.

Throughout the parish, many people are staying in shelters, either in community centers or in two central installations: the recreational center "el coro" (69 people affected by flooding currently staying there), and where the guanacos workshop was (currently housing 20

people affected by mudslides).

The parish, in addition to coordinating the shelter space, is forming three commissions, one for each sector of the parish, to attend to the population. The parish is also coordinating with the mayor's office regarding the burial of the cadavers which are still being uncovered from the La Labor mudslide. Finally, they are working to provide basic needs to the evacuees and disaster victims, such as mattresses, water, food, and clothing.

The parish is accepting donations to help cover the cost of the basic emergency items needed for those whose homes have been damaged or destroyed.

The parish will be posting updates on the situation to its website.  
[www.madre-delospobres.org](http://www.madre-delospobres.org).

### **San Roque**

According to Padre William, The situation in the parish is currently under control. There have not been any evacuations. However, the parish suffered more during the rains of the past two weeks, in which two mudslides affected the community, La Florida. No one was hurt, and the flooded homes have since been recovered. They are currently working to keep the river cleared. The problem, apparently, is a bridge in poor condition, which needs to be replaced.

### **CODESMA (communication with Nuvia)**

The CODESMA team is currently out bringing back updates on the state of the communities. The following are communities with known flood damage:

- o Tiguapan (Puerto de la Libertad). Community flooded.
- o Chilama (Puerto de la Libertad). Mudslides early this morning. Evacuations.
- o The communities of the municipality of Comasagua. The road is obstructed and there is no entrance. CODESMA trying to communicate by phone to assess situation.

CODESMA responses:

- o Assist in evacuations.
- o May do a mini-campaign for food and staples for evacuees.

There are currently five communities with active emergency response committees. These are among the communities in greatest risk of flooding, because they are located near rivers. These committees usually work side-by-side with the community directives (councils) to provide special care and preventative attention to high risk families (those who live near rivers, ravines, or where mudslides are frequent). If risk is determined, these emergency committees evacuate the families to the community center. If community centers fill up, they will request evacuation housing from CODESMA, who will work to settle evacuees in the CODESMA office installations, or through communication with the mayor will work on making shelter available at the church or in the municipal center (casa communal). The communities with organized emergency response teams are:

- o Chilama
- o Charcon
- o Coyolarge
- o Asuchio (there was an obstructed road but it has been cleared).
- o Corinto

There are many communities deemed to be at risk. CODESMA is still awaiting report backs on them. These include La Bomba and El Taquillo.

### **San Vicente**

## **San Vicente**

The flooding in the Bajo Lempa is always worse than in other parts of the country because the hydroelectric dams begin releasing large quantities of water from the Lempa River into communities downstream. While the normal amount of water released is around 1500 cubic meters per second, currently 4500 cubic meters per second are released. It could rise to as much as 5000 cms. This means significant flooding in the area. The dams are already overflowing and many communities remain isolated now, including the street where MUGAN's (the women cattle ranchers whom SHARE supports.) office is based where the levees were never built. We are asking for donations to help these communities in the Bajo Lempa as they grapple with the floods.

In Tecoluca, yesterday they were evacuating four communities: Taura, San Bartolo, Rancho Grande and Las Anonas. They recognize that the dams will start overflowing that are on the Lempa River. Later that day they announced that any communities below El Playón would be evacuated. Over 2500 people were evacuated. There are still more communities to evacuate, but the municipal government's office has run out of money and the federal government has not sent a dime. Those evacuated communities will be staying in the San Nicolás Market, a project funded by SHARE.

Already the community of San Carlos (where some groups have stayed and visited in the pastoral center) is flooded. But there is not too much panic there as they think that with some work on the drainage system that the water will subside.

While the flooding and rains are alarming and concerning, there is also hope. It is through the power of community organizing that these communities are evacuating those in danger, assessing basic needs and finding shelter for the displaced. This level of organization has prevented many more possible deaths.

## **Conclusion**

Similar to what we witnessed during Katrina a month ago in the US, the central government is hardly present in these evacuations. It is the work of the regional CRIPDES office and the local municipality that has made it possible for these evacuations to happen. Part of SHARE's work is to accompany people during natural disasters by supporting emergency efforts, advocating for policies that mitigate the negative impacts of natural disasters for the poor and by physically and spiritually walking with communities and civil society. We encourage you to send solidarity messages during this time to the communities via Leslie Bilchick in our El Salvador office. Her email is: [leslie@share-elsalvador.org](mailto:leslie@share-elsalvador.org). We will keep you posted as the events unfold.

If you would like to support the efforts to help the communities in San Vicente to evacuate and get access to food, water, blankets and pillows, please send checks to:

The SHARE Foundation  
598 Bosworth St, #1  
San Francisco, CA 94131