



Central America & Mexico

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

The European Commission's humanitarian aid to **Central America and Mexico amounts to €222.4 million since 1994.**

€74.6 million for **Disaster Risk Reduction** since 1998, of which **€8.3 million** have been allocated for **2016** and **€2 million** for **2017.**

European Commission humanitarian assistance to **Central America and Mexico for 2017: €4.1 million.**

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

Through ECHO funding, over 120 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).

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

*Tel.: (+32 2) 295 44 00
Fax: (+32 2) 295 45 72
email:
echo-info@ec.europa.eu*

*Website:
http://ec.europa.eu/echo*



* All the latest ECHO Factsheets:
bit.ly/echo-fs



In San Pedro Sula, Honduras, Save the Children counsellors run EU-funded workshops to provide ongoing education and protection to children affected by urban violence. ©EU /ECHO/A. Aragón 2016

Key messages

- **Central America and Mexico are highly vulnerable to disasters** caused by natural hazards such as **earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, hurricanes, landslides and droughts**, due to unplanned urbanisation, climate change, widespread poverty and extreme levels of pervasive violence.
- The European Commission has provided **emergency humanitarian response** to all major crises that have struck the region in the past 20 years. Assistance often includes temporary shelter, food assistance, clean water and proper sanitation for victims of disasters.
- In addition to emergency response, **Disaster Risk Reduction** is a priority, and the Commission has delivered substantial support to strengthen local communities and national institutions so as to **prevent, prepare for and mitigate the impact of future disasters** before they strike.
- A third of the assistance delivered has focused on **increasing the resilience** of vulnerable people, by identifying and addressing recurrent risks.
- The Commission is one of the few donors addressing the severe humanitarian impacts of the **pervasive violence in Mexico** and the "Northern Triangle" of **El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala** in Central America, which particularly affects children and women, causing mass displacement and migration.

Humanitarian situation and needs

Background

Central America and Mexico are highly exposed to the impact of hydro-meteorological and geophysical hazards. **Each year, an estimated average 1.7 million people in the region are affected by earthquakes, volcanic**

eruptions, landslides, floods, droughts or hurricanes, requiring emergency assistance. Their impact is often under-reported, particularly in the case of medium-scale or climate-related events such as floods and droughts, although their humanitarian impact can be severe.

High exposure to hazards combined with poverty and extreme levels of violence are eroding the coping capacities of local populations and institutions, leading to recurrent emergency situations. As **climate change and booming urbanization leave increasing numbers of people exposed to disasters**, making communities and national systems more resilient while reducing their dependence on humanitarian assistance is a priority. When disasters hit the region, the **most pressing needs usually include temporary shelter, food, safe water, proper sanitation, primary health care, protection, basic relief items**, hygiene promotion (so as to prevent waterborne diseases), infrastructure repairs and the recovery of livelihoods. Given the high levels of vulnerability, empowering communities and local institutions to prepare for, and respond to natural hazards optimizes resources.

Successive shocks over the last years - exacerbated by the 2014-2016 El Niño droughts - have seriously deteriorated the **food security** of the region's daily labourers, small-scale farmers and their families living at subsistence level. In 2015, unusually low rainfall during the harvest season combined with a prolonged dry spell led to **crop losses of between 80% and 100% in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras**. According to the U.N. World Food Program, **2.5 million people are food insecure** as a result. External support is needed during 2016 and 2017, particularly by small farmers and their families living in Central America's "Dry Corridor", which includes southern Guatemala, northern Honduras and western El Salvador.

The **devastating impact of Central America's pervasive violence** on populations is extremely high, with death rates similar to open conflict, leading to forced displacement, lack of access to basic services, the recruitment of children and confinement of populations by armed groups. **In 2015, El Salvador had the highest homicide rate in the world (103 per 100 000 people) and 289 000 Salvadorans were internally displaced by the criminal violence.** At least **714 500 people are currently internally displaced (IDPs) in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador**, the majority fleeing organized crime and gang violence. Some 106 000 are refugees who fled their country, of which only 24% have received limited assistance.

The European Union's Humanitarian Response

Funding

Since 1994, the European Commission has allocated **€222.4 million in humanitarian aid to Central America and Mexico**. About two thirds (**€136.2 million**) has been used to respond to emergencies such as floods, droughts, epidemics, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, internal displacements and the humanitarian consequences of organised violence. The remaining third (**€74.6 million**) has been invested in preparing vulnerable communities and their institutions to face future disasters.

Response to emergencies

In 2017, the Commission has allocated **€2.1 million** to assist the **most vulnerable populations in Guatemala and to respond to the food crisis** in the most vulnerable communities affected by recurrent droughts and the deterioration of the institutional capacity for prevention and attention provision at local and national level.

Reducing the impact of natural hazards

The European Commission integrates **Disaster Risk Reduction** (DRR) in all its projects, and dedicates specific programmes to addressing these risks. The Disaster Preparedness programme DIPECHO focuses on strengthening the capacities of local communities and institutions, by enabling them to identify risks and to take mitigation measures so as to be better prepared to respond to natural hazards, therefore increasing their **resilience**. Activities include support for **early warning systems, education and awareness campaigns, local disaster management policies and protocols**, as well as infrastructure works to reduce disaster impacts and protect livelihoods.

The **2017-2018 DIPECHO programme** grants **€2 million** to disaster preparedness activities in Central America, benefiting 15 900 people in the region.

