

ANNEX 6

COUNTRY PAPERS AND NOTES

A EL SALVADOR: CONCLUSIONS

I. NATIONAL CAPACITY

1.1 National Context

Although El Salvador is considered the least affected country, the regions concerned were severely damaged, particularly along the Lempa river basin. Casualties could have been lower with better levels of national preparedness. Poverty and isolation exacerbated the impact of Mitch.

1.2 Co-ordination, Preparedness and Response

(a) Findings

- COEN co-ordinated from a distance and gathered information on damages and needs. Given the questionable quality and reliability of the data, the mission could not figure out whether there is, today, a shared view of the impact of the disaster, among all institutions met.
- **The Ministry of Health, with PAHO/WHO support, has progressed. COEN has benefited from PAHO and OFDA support and has developed manuals and procedures. However, there is no evidence of it formulating or promoting an emergency plan or relevant legislation. It is not equipped, poorly staffed and with no resources to ensure a minimum field presence or network.**
- The *Secretaria Nacional de la Familia* and the Governors were in charge of the organisation of the relief distribution.
- The mission could not gather comprehensive information on existing early warning systems. Most interlocutors, however, stressed that the system set up by the local communities themselves was essential for reducing the number of casualties.
- Good response of the National Red Cross Society, which since 1986, has significantly improved its level of preparedness; the Armed Forces; the Ministry of Health; the private sector and the National Police; in spite of lack of an integrated approach and sufficient resources.

- The NGOs, through a large field network, and the local communities were at the core of the response. Municipal authorities also played a key role, but there was no comprehensive approach for the provision of resources at their level.

(b) Recommendations

- The UN RC may consider the undertaking of a lessons learned exercise, involving governmental (notably COEN), municipal and local authorities, the Red Cross, the NGOs and the UN CT.
- Due to its installed capacity, trained personnel and nation-wide coverage, the Ministry of Health could be an excellent entry point to achieve an inter-institutional co-ordination of preparedness at the local level. PAHO should continue to strengthen its support to the Ministry of Health in those areas. In this context, to make disaster plans effective, the UN CT should consider enhancing nation-wide preparedness (including public education), building on existing expertise in local communities and involving municipal authorities and based on improved information management.
- The UN RC may consider supporting COEN in the formulation and the enforcement of a national emergency plan and relevant legislation. The latter, eventually, should emphasise the need for a civil service in disaster management, to avoid the incidence of political factors before, during and after a disaster.
- Training supported by the UN should be more comprehensive and include all involved institutions including municipalities, local committees and the Civil Society, in addition to COEN. This would foster teamwork during the emergencies among governmental and non-governmental agencies.
- A lessons learned exercise focussing on SUMA may lead to its adoption and further promotion by UN agencies. Institutions managing humanitarian supplies may then train their staff in supply management.
- The UN CT should advocate for (or undertake directly) assessment of the social sectors and the impact on the most vulnerable groups (in collaboration with the relevant national and local partners). It should then attempt to fill any gaps in the response, transition and recovery phases. (i.e following the example of the Honduras' "The Human Impact of Mitch")

1.3 Disaster Prevention and Mitigation

(a) Findings

- These issues have not been aggressively addressed in the country in spite of its high vulnerability conditions. Some attempts have been made at sectoral level. There are building codes that are not enforced

- External Co-operation efforts to promote disaster mitigation and prevention have been atomised and little impact has been achieved.
- In a number of cases the vulnerability reduction cannot be dealt with at the national level only. For example, watershed management or surveillance system for preventing transmissible diseases depend entirely on regional efforts. The geographical position of El Salvador and its widespread trade with neighbouring countries makes it dependent on hazard management in other countries.
- COEN and other disaster-specialised units are not participating in the formulation of the reconstruction programme.

(b) Recommendations

- UNDP, OCHA and other relevant HQs should support current PAHO, UNDP and other UN agencies' capacity building efforts in disaster preparedness and mitigation in a multisectoral manner at national, regional, municipal and, above all, the local community levels.
- It is urgent to resettle the population displaced by hurricane Mitch that is at substantial risk (diseases, unemployment, poor construction, etc.). Projects should emphasise sustainable vulnerability reduction and sustainable livelihoods.
- The UN CT should assist their counterparts in ensuring that prevention and mitigation are part of the national or regional proposals to be presented in Stockholm.
- UN programmes should focus on marginal urban and rural areas, where almost all victims of this hurricane and previous disasters live. Their living conditions, lack of access to education, health and sustainable livelihoods, if not address, will place them at risk when a disaster strikes again.
- The UN should:
 - Advocate for the explicit inclusion of disaster reduction in its proposals, based on "a better chance of obtaining financing for sustainable projects";
 - Advocate for wide consultation of these programmes and projects proposals with the municipal and local authorities;
 - Foster urgent dialogue between the Civil Society and the Government;
 - Continue to focus on priority social sectors seeking further funding, including direct UN HQs financial support; two key priorities:
 - To ensure that displaced children and children in communities that have lost infrastructure, equipment and material, have access to school with at least minimum equipment and materials.

- Efforts to prepare the health sector and reduce its vulnerability should be consolidated to further reduce morbidity/mortality rates. It is urgent to rehabilitate sanitation services and monitor the levels of malnutrition.
- The UN CT and relevant HQs to support efforts addressing watershed management and global environment issues, on a regional basis.

C) II. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

(a) Findings

- A considerable amount of the international and national assistance was channelled through NGOs. That has been, in a number of cases, a good solution to reach quickly the most affected population.
- There were: (a) Unwanted relief supplies, (b) a very complex in country handling of emergency relief, involving too many actors and difficult to monitor.
- IDB revised its internal regulations and approved emergency procedures, speeding-up action.

(b) Recommendations

- UN should seek donors' support for development programmes fostering permanent sustainable disaster mitigation/prevention structures, self-ensuring development inputs.

III. UN SYSTEM CAPACITY

3.1 Co-ordination, Preparedness and Response

(a) Findings

- In spite of the limited level of certified information, UN CT's management of information available was a very positive contribution. This was reflected in the excellent analytical document of mid-November and the UN website. In this context, UNICEF and WFP played a key role in the direct provision of data through their field networks and communication system.
- There was good co-operation between aid organisations (UN, NGOs) and the municipalities (Mayors).
- Under the leadership of the Deputy Res. Rep. there has been an effective security and disaster preparedness effort within UNDP, although the DMT in El Salvador almost never met since the 86 earthquake with the exception of a few training sessions.
- Uneven use and efficiency of SUMA system.

(b) Recommendations

- Financial and operational services and equipment are essential during the emergency and recovery phases, UN HQs and, in particular, UNDP (ERD) and OCHA should support UN RC's and UN CT's efforts in:
 - Developing stand-by agreements with donors for up-front cash funding for the RC (lead agency: OCHA).
 - Understand the role and comparative advantage of UNDAC teams, and how to make use of UN response mechanisms, such as MCDU, Pisa Warehouse; SUMA; CERF, (lead agency: OCHA)
 - Being aware of who is who on disaster management within the UN System.
 - Providing a module and checklist on Disaster Management Training (DMT), (lead agency: UNDP/ERD).
 - Formulating a training programme for national journalists to ensure that they assume their key role within Early Warning and other preparedness mechanisms (lead agency: UNDP/ERD with PAHO/WHO support).
 - Strengthening the RC's Office's public information capacity.
 - Enhancing UNCT efforts towards ensuring sustainable levels of livelihood through productive activities (lead agency: UNDP/ERD).
- UN HQs, again with special mention of OCHA and UNDP/ERD, to:
 - Engage UN CT in the development of mechanisms for the UN to identify and make rapid use of helicopters in the regional (lead agency: OCHA)
 - Expand UNDAC regional membership and identify UNDAC members with relevant information processing expertise and experience (lead agency: OCHA)
 - Provide each member of the UN CT with relevant staffing support (technical, administrative, public information, etc.) when a disaster strikes.
 - Undertake a lessons learned exercise on SUMA in the context of the response to Mitch. PAHO/WHO considering the possibility for the entire UN System to adopt the SUMA system.
 - Cooperate with ECLAC in fine tuning its existing assessment methodology to further enhance the UN CT's advocacy role on behalf of social sectors.
- The DMT must be a permanent body that meets frequently and regularly:
 - Agencies to designate focal points with alternates
 - Include other actors such as Government counterparts, the red cross and key donors
 - Expand its role to promote the inclusion of disaster reduction in the Agencies' country programmes
- RC to consider adopting the "Emergency Core Group" and "Lead Agency" concepts in early stages of emergency response, including RC, UNDP, PAHO, UNICEF and WFP, following the model established in Honduras.

- The UN CT to maintain and improve the information management devices set-up during Mitch, with more analytical capacity and global perspective for preparedness and mitigation purposes.
- UNICEF and WFP to extend the use of their radio network to the rest of the system on a cost-sharing basis.
- UN Disaster Management Team (DMT) to work permanently to strengthen UN and national disaster preparedness and mitigation programmes and in integrating these concepts in all co-operation activities, sectoral reforms and legislative revisions.
- The security plan and disaster preparedness plans should continue to be updated regularly and include pre-arranged mechanisms to access, quickly, to transport means (helicopters).
- UN agencies have to further assist the country through training, especially at local level through NGOs , municipalities, private associations, etc.
- UNCT to finalise internal discussion on the draft on the transition from relief to development, as a strategy document to be discussed with local donor representatives and eventually presented in the Stockholm CG.
- The UN CT to maintain and improve the information management devices set-up during Mitch, with more analytical capacity and global perspectives.
- UN programmes should focus on marginal urban and rural areas, where almost all victims of this hurricane, and previous disasters live. Their living condition, lack of access to education, health and sustainable livelihoods, if not addressed, will put them at risk, when disaster strikes again.
- Victims of Mitch, in particular children, women and the elderly need comprehensive psychological support to process their traumatic experiences. The UN CT may consider a joint proposal to relevant UN HQs (PAHO/WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, etc.)

B GUATEMALA - CONCLUSIONS

I. NATIONAL CAPACITY

1.1 National Context

Hurricane Mitch hit Guatemala on two regions: the Atlantic Coast and Northwest Departments and the Pacific coast. Although prolonged severe weather and road blockages hindered relief operations, the disaster did not surpass the local capacity to respond and international co-operation was complementary to the national public and private response. For the rehabilitation and reconstruction stages, the situation will become more complex, as the peace agenda, which requires compliance with a wide variety of commitments, might prevent allocation of resources for disaster prevention and mitigation.

1.2 Co-ordination, Preparedness and Response

(a) Findings

- Early warning was adequate and evacuation successful. However, policy decisions regarding the declaration of the State of Emergency and response planning were rather *ad-hoc* and therefore media support weak.
- The *Comisión Nacional para la Reducción de los Desastres* (CONRED) was reasonably well prepared through a network of departmental, municipal and local Emergency Committees which were alerted and entered in operation before the hurricane stroke. However, its capacity began to weaken as the territory to cover grew, due to:
 - Lack of an aggressive effort in co-ordination as the national and international, public and private actors began to multiply.
 - Lack of a logistics plan to organise massive transport of relief goods and attention to shelters in isolated communities.
 - Lack of adequate communications infrastructure and information system, preventing a systematic transmission of information to those in charge of planning the response.

The President then felt the need to designate his Executive Secretary as head of operations.

- CONRED's phase-out was considered too early in the process and there was no formal institutional transfer of the remaining relief operations.
- The *Instituto Nacional de Vulcanología, Hidrología y Meteorología* (INSIVUMEH) has little resources to monitor climatic and geophysical conditions and to produce basic information for disaster response and development planning.

- Damages/needs assessments concentrated on macro-economic indicators, infrastructure and cash crops. Limited attention was initially given to the social sectors and to small producers, which, given structural poverty issues, constituted the most affected population.
- The Government did not express interest in co-ordinating activities with international or local NGOs.

(b) Recommendations

- The UN CT, with the support of relevant UN Headquarters, should attempt to strengthen CONRED and INSIVUMEH, with special emphasis on local and municipal emergency committees in order to build capacity in communities in high-risk areas, addressing, *inter alia* community awareness, organisation and training; and information management
- Programmes sponsored by the UN should be comprehensive and include all involved institutions such as municipalities, local committees and the civil defence structures. This may foster teamwork among partners during emergencies.
- The UN CT should advocate for (or undertake directly) assessment of the social sectors and the impact on the most vulnerable groups (in collaboration with the relevant national and local partners). It should then attempt to fill any gaps in the response, transition and recovery phases.
- That the concept of the “On-site Operations Co-ordination Centre” (OSOCC) be tested in a joint Government-UN effort, as a possible effective preparedness measure.

1.3 Disaster Prevention and Mitigation

(a) Findings

- CONRED has attempted to sensitise development planners on the importance of mainstreaming disaster prevention and mitigation. However, it has little convening capacity and the Government has not traditionally considered this a priority.
- There is no substantive evidence that disaster reduction is specifically addressed in the Reconstruction Programmes and in the overall development process. However, the Government has recently announced its decision to formulate a National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Plan, an initiative that should be encouraged and supported.
- The new legislation under consideration establishes a National Fund for Disaster Reduction with an initial endowment of US\$1 million for mitigation and

preparedness projects. Co-financing is required for certain aspects not specifically covered by the fund.

- The national 100-day Plan and the UN Transitional Appeal were launched in different time frames. The Transitional Appeal overlapped with preparations for the IDB-hosted Consultative Group and it was considered: a) Headquarters driven; b) lacking Government participation; c) lacking previously agreed strategies for the formulation, launching and follow-up.
- As recently informed to the Mission, the Government has invited the international and NGO communities to participate in the preparations for the Stockholm GC meeting in May 1999.

(b) Recommendations

- The UN CT should foster dialogue among planning authorities, line ministries, sectoral authorities and CONRED in order to promote the consideration of disaster reduction issues as part of sustainable human development and their explicit inclusion in the reconstruction programmes to be presented in Stockholm.
- The UN CT, with the support of UNDP/ERD, OCHA and relevant Agency Headquarters, should encourage the Government's initiative to design an integrated, multi-sectoral disaster management programme. Moreover, it should undertake a comprehensive assessment of all existing UN sponsored development programmes to determine the possibility of incorporating disaster reduction components and environmental concerns to present and future projects, at the national and regional levels.
- Moreover, the UN, in the framework of the consultative platform established by the Government, should:
 - Advocate for the explicit inclusion of disaster reduction in its proposals, based on "a better chance of obtaining financing for sustainable projects",
 - Advocate for wide consultation of these programmes and projects proposals with the municipal and local authorities;
 - Continue to focus on priority social sectors seeking further funding, including direct UN HQs financial support, two key priorities:
 - To ensure that displaced children and children in communities that have lost infrastructure, equipment and material, have access to quality education;
 - Efforts to prepare the health sector and reduce its vulnerability should be consolidated to further reduce morbidity/mortality. It is urgent to rehabilitate sanitation services and monitor the levels of malnutrition.
- The UN CT and relevant HQs to support efforts addressing watershed management and global environment issues, on a regional basis.

II. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

(a) Findings

- The donor community provided prompt and strong logistical support (i.e. Mexico and the United States) and cash and in-kind contributions in a speedy manner.
- Good interaction with some donors (i.e. The Netherlands and Switzerland) who were ready to provide funds for priorities identified, and between foreign military and logistic assets and in country counterparts.
- Co-ordination of the international community in country was well supported by the UN System. As the information system generated by the Resident Co-ordinator's Office expanded, donors began to perceive an added value and joined.

(b) Recommendations

- The UN CT should attempt to sustain the information systems generated in the response phase for preparedness and mitigation purposes.

III. UN SYSTEM CAPACITY

3.1 Co-ordination, Preparedness and Response

(a) Findings

- The Resident Co-ordinator had an in country UNDAC team of four: two working directly with the UN and two in their regular Government functions. The team incorporated to the UN CT from the onset of the disaster. This provided an advantage in co-ordinating operations.
- Although the DMT is not a permanent structure, other thematic groups that meet regularly under the Reform programme provided the basis for an effective inter-agency co-ordination. The Country Team, thus, constituted the DMT and was able to mobilise rapidly thanks to the experience, field presence and logistic support of agencies and MINUGUA. Thus, previous UN reform efforts towards full co-ordination proved to be an asset.
- There was no previous experience on the process of mobilising resources, including the inter-agency transitional appeal, on which no member had previous experience.
- The UN System lacks adequate communication systems, due to the new Government regulations regarding award of radio frequencies. No radio network is available with the exception of MINUGUA and UNHCR, both of which have limited mandates and will close offices soon.

- Regulations, procedures and systems (i.e. accounting, procurement) are designed for “normal times” and would need to be more decentralised to country level.

(b) Recommendations

- Financial and operational services and equipment are essential during the emergency and recovery phases, UN HQs and, in particular, UNDP (ERD) and OCHA should support UN RC’s and UN CT’s efforts in:
 - Developing stand-by agreements with donors for up-front cash funding for the RC (lead agency: OCHA).
 - Understand the role and comparative advantage of UNDAC teams, and how to make use of UN response mechanisms, such as MCDU; Pisa Warehouse; SUMA; CERF, (lead agency: OCHA).
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 - Provide each member of the UN CT with relevant staffing support (technical, administrative, public information, etc.) when a disaster strikes.
 - Undertake a lessons learned exercise on SUMA in the context of the response to Mitch. PAHO/WHO considering the possibility for the entire UN System to adopt the SUMA system.
 - Co-operate with ECLAC in fine tuning its existing assessment methodology to further enhance the UN CT’s advocacy role on behalf of social sectors.
- The DMT must be a permanent body that meets frequently and regularly. Each Agency must designate a focal point and an alternate and other actors such as the Government counterparts, the Red Cross and key donors must participate in order to have agreed co-ordination mechanisms before a disaster strikes. It should expand its role to promote the inclusion of disaster reduction in the Agencies’ country programmes.

- RC to consider adopting the “Emergency Core Group” and “Lead Agency” concepts in early stages of emergency response, including RC, UNDP, PAHO, UNICEF and WFP, following the model established in Honduras
- WFP/UNICEF should expedite the setting-up and operation of the joint telecommunications network and open it to inter-agency participation on a cost-sharing basis.
- The UN CT to maintain and improve the information management devices set-up during Mitch, with more analytical capacity and global perspective for preparedness and mitigation purposes.
- The UN CT capacity would be greatly enhanced with the designation by UNDP/ERD of a permanent staff member in charge of disaster management and emergency-related issues.
- Victims of Mitch, in particular children, women and the elderly need comprehensive psychological support to process their traumatic experiences. The UN CT may consider a joint proposal to relevant UN HQs (PAHO/WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, etc.)

C HONDURAS: CONCLUSIONS

I. NATIONAL CAPACITY

1.1 National Context

Honduras was the hardest hit, wide spread floods isolated countless communities and victims were not reachable for days. The capital city was severely affected. In spite of external support in this sector, the reduced number of helicopters and weather conditions, prevented airlift rescue and relief operations. Road transportation was impossible for days. The magnitude of the impact made it virtually impossible for any country to handle it. There is a dramatic loss of sustainable livelihoods.

1.2 Co-ordination, Preparedness and Response

(a) Findings

- The Meteorology Institute does not have sufficient technical capacity and the means to generate effective early warnings.
- **The Permanent Commission for Contingency (COPECO in its Spanish acronym), and all government institutions, were overwhelmed by the magnitude of Mitch's impact. Preparedness levels were low. COPECO never had enough resources and capacity to build-up comprehensive disaster response machinery.**
- In spite of this, during the emergency phase, COPECO provided a general view of the dimension of the damages and casualties. However, its national and regional structures and limited resources could hardly support its municipal/local levels.
- UNDP is designing a project to strengthen COPECO with short-term actions such as: a) Identification of priority areas; b) Identification of key partners; c) Formulation of contingency planning for these areas and, d) Satellite pictures and risk mapping.
- **The national authorities have made a remarkable effort to ensure transparency in the use of foreign aid.** The Office of the Comptroller had an innovative and key role. To facilitate the use of foreign resources, tax exemptions were applied to relief commodities, while emergency administrative procedures were issued.
- **A National Emergency Commission** was set-up to co-ordinate the relief response with the support of the private sector in the logistic tasks and in the establishment of a national information centre.
- **The local communities** directly affected by the disaster **and the municipalities** (in a varying degree, very much dependent on the capacity and leadership of each Major

concerned) **played a crucial role in rescuing victims and saving lives. Their role remains essential during the current recovery phase.**

- According to various sources **death toll was lower in areas where (a) disaster preparedness training had taken place before and, (b) where El Niño related relief programmes were operating.**
- The national media did not play the role it should have assumed. Instead of being the link with the population during the early warning stage, it disseminated inaccurate and misleading news (discarding the possibility of Mitch landing) and gave sensationalist accounts, once the hurricane hit the northern coast.
- National NGOs, often teaming-up with their international partners, were everywhere, but with limited resources and co-ordination. Their role keeps on increasing, in part thanks to external support and direct links with the population affected.

(b) Recommendations

- The UN Country Team (CT) to support government, local and municipal institutions' capacity to manage disaster by fostering mutual support and joint co-ordination.
- UNDP (with support of ERD, PAHO/WHO, etc.) to continue strengthening COPECO mechanisms, focusing first on local communities and relevant Alcaldías. Similarly, it should support COPECO in formulating a revised draft legislation on disaster management and reduction.

1.3 Disaster Prevention and Mitigation

(a) Findings

- The Government established a **Reconstruction Cabinet** to design the country's medium and long term reconstruction strategy reflected in a "Master Plan" to be presented in the next meeting of the Consultative Group.
- Recovery and reconstruction processes are very dependent on external support and there is little concern about long-term disaster reduction approaches. Moreover, the sanitary conditions are still poor in a number of areas and need urgent attention.
- Mitch has aggravated the pre-existing vulnerability to floods and other disasters. The enlargement of riverbeds, the persistent rainfalls in the North and the enormous amounts of sedimentation and debris, make the following tasks urgent: a) Mitigation works in flood-prone areas (investment projects); b) Increased community organisation, training and awareness.
- Neither COPECO, nor the Alcaldías, the Civil Society or national and international NGOs are directly involved in the formulation of the National Master Plan. Although

the *Foro Nacional de Convergencia* (FONAC) is involved in this effort, it seems to represent only a fraction of the Civil Society.

- **Two key priorities:** a) the identification, as soon and effectively as possible, of land for the displaced, ensuring their definite relocation, and b) to ensure sustainable levels of livelihoods for all.

(b) Recommendations

- Through its technical backstopping to the Reconstruction Cabinet, the UN should:
 - Advocate for the explicit inclusion of disaster reduction in its proposals, based on “a better chance of obtaining financing for sustainable projects”;
 - Advocate for wide consultation of these programmes and projects proposals with the municipal and local authorities;
 - Foster urgent dialogue between the Civil Society and the Government;
 - Continue to focus on priority social sectors seeking further funding, including direct UN HQs financial support; two key priorities:
 - To ensure that displaced children and children in communities that have lost infrastructure, equipment and material, have access to school with at least minimum equipment and materials.
 - Efforts to prepare the health sector and reduce its vulnerability should be consolidated to further reduce morbidity/mortality rates. It is urgent to rehabilitate sanitation services and monitor the levels of malnutrition.
- The UN should continue supporting the Office of the Comptroller in order to better prepare it for the complex tasks of reconstruction surveillance.
- The UN CT and relevant HQs to support efforts addressing watershed management and global environment issues, on a regional basis.

II. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

(a) Findings

- **Governments and the Civil Society throughout the World, have provided Honduras with unprecedented levels of assistance, directly or through the Civil Society mechanisms, the UN System and governmental institutions.**
- Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA) of the Americas, Europe and (for the first time ever) the Far East, provided Honduras with invaluable support by, *inter alia*, rescuing victims, channelling relief, repairing infrastructure, providing technical support. The interaction between MCDA and the Government and, in particular, the local communities and municipalities, was reported as very good.

- Members of the diplomatic corps were present in the places hardest hit by Mitch, providing aid and comfort to local authorities and communities, and supporting assets provided by their own countries.

(b) Recommendations

- The international community needs more accurate and timely information. With adequate funding, the UN CT could strengthen links with, and improve, the COPECO response machinery, which would benefit from the UN comparative advantage regarding information processing and dissemination.
- OCHA, in close co-operation with its partners, should undertake a detailed analysis of how MCDA, operated. OCHA should then review its capacity to ensure support to MCDA deployed as a response to its appeal (this includes more detailed OCHA requests and follow-up as regards assets needed).

III. UN SYSTEM CAPACITY

3.1 Co-ordination, Preparedness and Response

(a) Findings

- The Honduras UN CT is the first one in Latin America and the Caribbean region moving into a UN House. Thanks to **prior** team building efforts, it was immediately able to gather momentum when Mitch stroke. The UN CT provided a comprehensive response, using the comparative advantages and field presence of agencies with larger experience in disaster response (PAHO/WHO, WFP and UNICEF). UN emergency related mechanisms were effectively used (PAHO's SUMA; OCHA UNDAC team, grants and Pisa airlifts; UNICEF's EPF, etc.). It was pointed out to the Mission that the prompt allocation of UNDP TRAC 1.1.3 expedited and facilitated the response.
- The concepts of **"Emergency Core Group"** and **"Lead Agency"** were successfully applied. **The mission commends their decision to act on the basis of UN agencies' practical experience and specific in country assets, rather than on respective mandates.**
- The UN CT established UN inter-agency field teams, throughout the country, strengthening relationships with local and municipal counterparts. UNDP, UNICEF, PAHO/WHO and WFP NGO partners were fully involved. **Moreover, the mission commends the innovative use of some 150 national and international UNVs, who constitute the backbone of the UN presence in project sites.** During the current recovery phase, all UN agencies or associates in Honduras (FAO, IOM, ILO, UNFPA, UNESCO, etc.) are involved in addressing, as a system, remaining priorities.
- Thanks to the quick recovery of national telecommunication facilities, its working relationship with COPECO, and the WFP/UNICEF radio network, the UN CT became

an essential actor in information processing and dissemination. Census and surveys collected and processed for the Human Development Report were used to plan relief, transition and reconstruction activities. The UNDAC team was involved in this exercise. In spite of difficulties, the UN CT regularly provided the international community with updated information.

- Building on the existing relationship with Governmental authorities, the UN is an important partner of the National Reconstruction Cabinet. It is also expanding its Co-operation with national, municipal and local counterparts.
- The UN CT is currently focused in addressing, in a multi-sectoral manner, key areas which are among the most important causes of the Honduras' high vulnerability to natural disasters: a) poverty alleviation, b) sustainable development, c) governance (particularly at the municipal level) and d) environment related issues.
- The UNCT made effective use of communication means available improving the UN capacity by setting-up a website. Existing resources, from several UN agencies and associates (WFP, PAHO/WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, IOM, etc.) were deployed and used in a joint effort. The UN focused on the most affected areas, strengthening the response capacity of local and municipal authorities.
- However, the UN could not be of help in addressing the key requirement for helicopters, working arrangements between OCHA and foreign MCDA needs revision; the Transitional Appeal process has to be reviewed in order to ensure UNCT, donors and national counterparts' ownership and, therefore, an increased level of effectiveness.
- The UN CT experience during the emergency and the current recovery phase, has strengthened the local UN Reform process. A central element: the harmonisation of programming cycles (as from the year 2000 for the UNDG).
- **The mission commends the courage, commitment and dedication of the UN staff, especially those who lost relatives, homes and assets during the dramatic moments faced by the people of Honduras.**

(b) Recommendations

- Financial and operational services and equipment are essential during the emergency and recovery phases, UN HQs and, in particular, UNDP (ERD) and OCHA should support UN RC's and UN CT's efforts in:
 - Developing stand-by agreements with donors for up-front cash funding for the RC (lead agency: OCHA).
 - Understand the role and comparative advantage of UNDAC teams, and how to make use of UN response mechanisms, such as MCDU; Pisa Warehouse; SUMA; CERF, (lead agency: OCHA).
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- Providing a module and checklist on Disaster Management Training (DMT), (lead agency: UNDP/ERD).
 - Formulating a training programme for national journalists to ensure that they assume their key role within Early Warning and other preparedness mechanisms (lead agency: UNDP/ERD with PAHO/WHO support).
 - Strengthening the RC's Office's public information capacity.
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- UN HQs, again with special mention of OCHA and UNDP/ERD, to:
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 - Provide each member of the UN CT with relevant staffing support (technical, administrative, public information, etc.) when a disaster strikes.
 - Undertake a lessons learned exercise on SUMA in the context of the response to Mitch. PAHO/WHO considering the possibility for the entire UN System to adopt the SUMA system.
 - Co-operate with ECLAC in fine tuning its existing assessment methodology to further enhance the UN CT's advocacy role on behalf of social sectors.
 - UNDP report "The Human Impact of Mitch" will undoubtedly strengthen the UN advocacy role on behalf of the social sectors. Therefore, UN agencies' headquarters should financially support the UN CT to strengthen field presence and programme capacity and build on current initiatives and achievements in the most affected areas OCHA and UNDP/ERD should lead this effort together with existing emergency related offices in other UN agencies (e.g. UNICEF, PAHO/WHO, WFP, etc.).
 - Victims of Mitch, in particular children, women and the elderly need comprehensive psychological support to process their traumatic experiences. The UN CT may consider a joint proposal to relevant UN HQs (PAHO/WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, etc.)
 - Donors and UN agencies' headquarters should be fully aware that the current recovery phase still includes numerous emergency-like situations and that conditions may deteriorate if adequate resources are not forthcoming. **All should be in alert, as Honduras' vulnerability will remain high for months to come.**

D NICARAGUA: CONCLUSIONS

I. NATIONAL CAPACITY

1.1 National Context

Given the scale and force of Mitch, this was a disaster that would have been unmanageable by any national disaster management structure. However, with several exceptions (roads), the extent of the damages, in particular to the environment, is still unclear. Poverty and lack of sustainable livelihoods are among the worst consequences, while displaced persons remain in provisional shelters, without clear perspectives of permanent solutions. Unfortunately, the political dimension of the disaster management did not allow the UN to fully participate in the national emergency committee in the same way it had worked with the Government in previous disasters. This hampered UN response, particularly in ensuring quality information.

1.2 Co-ordination, Preparedness and Response

(a) Findings

- The State of Natural Disaster was declared late and had little preparedness measures attached to it, although bulletins were provided by INETER every six hours from 21 October onwards.
- **The Civil Defence was reasonably well prepared, but overwhelmed by the scale of the disaster. The Government took charge by establishing a National Emergency Commission, but did not include disaster management expertise. Thus Civil Defence was restricted to mostly gather information and had difficulties processing it satisfactorily, leading at times to contradictory information. However, there was a progressive improvement of the national bodies' response, particularly Civil Defence (information gathering), SAS, Ministry of Health, Committee and SRE (particularly in co-operating with UNICEF).**
- Local level Civil Defence and community committees existed and responded as well as they could, without clear co-ordination mechanisms. Churches (officially designated as the leading body for relief operations) and the Civil Society responded well independently, but were not prepared and their response was ad hoc and uncoordinated.
- The psychological impact on the victims requires attention. UNDP is executing two projects with strong psychological attention components and PAHO/WHO and UNICEF are currently focussing on this issue. The large number of children/adolescents without access to education is a matter of serious concern for the development process. Moreover, the resettlement of displaced families is constrained by difficulties related to land tenure and, again, directly affect women and children.

- Indigenous groups are not integrated into the response and remain geographically and operationally separated. UNDP is working in this field in the Rio Coco area.
- Replacing the national committee with six sectoral commissions at an early stage, prevented a comprehensive approach required for an effective rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction process.

(b) Recommendations

- The UN should fully participate in the national emergency committee from the onset of a disaster.
- UNDP should support INETER in carrying out risk mapping and microseismic assessments.
- UN CT should strengthen the Civil Defence, its committees and partners in preparedness activities at the local level and foster dialogue with Civil Society. It should also support the Civil Defence district and municipal preparedness plans.
- PAHO should continue to support the Ministry of Health to re-establish its preparedness programme and, eventually make use of its comparative advantage to involve other members of UN CT in its efforts, while the UN CT should work with Civil Defence, each UN agency should include disaster preparedness components in their co-operation with key line ministries.
- UNDP should carry out an evaluation of in-country logistical capacity.
- The UN CT should advocate for (or undertake directly) assessment of the social sectors and the impact on the most vulnerable groups (in collaboration with the relevant national and local partners). It should then attempt to fill any gaps in the response, transition and recovery phases. (i.e. following the example of the Honduras' "The Human Impact of Mitch")

1.3 Disaster Prevention and Mitigation

(b) Findings

- The National Emergency Committee was a temporary political creation, and as such not able to address disaster prevention and mitigation.
- There is a proposed legislation, which is to modify the national disaster management structure. The proposed legislation includes provisions for funding disaster prevention and mitigation in line ministries, though the high turnover of civil service staff weakens such efforts.

- The Civil Defence does maintain professional (military) career staff trained in disaster preparedness and prevention.
- The Civil Defence, INETER and line ministries can provide inputs for disaster mitigation and prevention components in development and recovery activities, at the behest of other actors.

(b) Recommendations

- UNDP should provide technical assistance and support for the pending legislation to ensure the mainstreaming of disaster mitigation and preparedness through far-reaching institutional modernisation and continuity in civil service professionals. It should ensure that legislation includes a high-level structure focussed on development planning with systematic awareness of environmental and disaster reduction issues, and ensure that legislation is subject to a broad consultation process.
- UNDP with the support of ERD should advocate for disaster prevention and mitigation activities as the basis for all activities carried out in the country, and benefit from traditional knowledge of indigenous populations for enhancing environmental sensitivity. In this context, vulnerability reduction and sustainable human development must be strongly emphasised.
- UN CT should support the six commissions to ensure that disaster reduction, mitigation and prevention components are included in the submissions to Stockholm, in so doing the CT would ensure a multi-sectoral approach.
- UN programmes should focus on marginal urban and rural areas, where almost all victims of this hurricane and previous disasters live. Their living conditions, lack of access to education, health and sustainable livelihoods, if not address, will place them at risk when a disaster strikes again.
- The UN should:
 - Advocate for the explicit inclusion of disaster reduction in its proposals, based on “a better chance of obtaining financing for sustainable projects”;
 - Advocate for wide consultation of these programmes and projects proposals with the municipal and local authorities;
 - Foster urgent dialogue between the Civil Society and the Government;
 - Continue to focus on priority social sectors seeking further funding, including direct UN HQs financial support; two key priorities:
 - To ensure that displaced children and children in communities that have lost infrastructure, equipment and material, have access to school with at least minimum equipment and materials.
 - Efforts to prepare the health sector and reduce its vulnerability should be consolidated to further reduce morbidity/mortality rates. It is urgent to rehabilitate sanitation services and monitor the levels of malnutrition.

- The UN CT and relevant HQs to support efforts addressing watershed management and global environment issues, on a regional basis

II. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

(b) Findings

- Effective deployment of foreign assets for, *inter alia*, rescue and transport of relief supplies in early days, particularly considering that the destruction of roads/bridges caused mayor difficulties for national relief efforts. There was large mobilisation of MCDA via OCHA/MCDU and, mainly, bilaterally. In general, there was an impressive support from Latin American countries and the main donors and their citizenry.
- All major actors are involved in the consultative group process and considering disaster prevention and mitigation.
- Very good interaction between the RC and the donor community and among donors.

(b) Recommendations

- UN Headquarters should support UN RC in efforts to ensure that
- All partners in reconstruction and development support efforts to create a permanent structure to address disaster mitigation and prevention in the long term – to ensure safety of investments.
- All partners at consultative group meeting in Stockholm ensure disaster mitigation and prevention components in all funded projects.
- Bilateral and international financial institutions ensure that national counterparts establish a permanent and sustainable disaster mitigation and prevention structure that will self-insure their development assistance.

IV. UN SYSTEM CAPACITY

3.1 Co-ordination, Preparedness and Response

(a) Findings

- Making very good use of funds provided by OCHA and UNDP/ERD, the UNDP RR/UN RC immediately placed five staff together with an experienced UNHCR member of UNDAC team in affected areas, facilitating local co-ordination with the Civil Society and Civil Defence. The same applies to staff sent by PAHO and UNICEF. In this context, UNICEF/PAHO joint programming prior to Mitch was an asset and facilitated a co-ordinated response between these two agencies.

- The members of UN CT, took a series of effective measures, in particular through the rapid reallocation of programme funds to emergency activities. Other initiatives include, *inter alia*: UNDP rapid allocation of funds for roads, communications, housing and logistics; WFP's rapid response in delivery of food, and approval of a six-month emergency programme with FAO; rapid allocation of funds by FAO HQ for the urgent purchase of seeds/fertilisers; rapid disbursement of PAHO and UNICEF funds to counterparts, and FAO, PAHO and UNICEF support to the government in rapid assessments.
- With the full back-up of the UNDP Country Office, the UNDAC team was able to perform successfully. Moreover, the RC formed a wider UN co-ordination group and a smaller operational team lead by PAHO/WHO
- The lack of regular access to the national committee, affected the UN System capacity to co-ordinate international and NGO efforts and provide full possible support to the national authorities. Nevertheless, with UNDAC and the UN CT support, the office of the UN RC became an information HUB for the international community and established good Co-operation with the Civil Defence in this regard.
- In spite of the fact that existing communications were insufficient, UNDP was able to support the Civil Defence and INETER in improving their network. WFP and UNICEF are currently installing a new network.
- Considering the possibility for UNDP to locally procure a variety of required items, OCHA contributions in cash were of a higher cost-benefit than those in kind.

(c) Recommendations

- Financial and operational services and equipment are essential during the emergency and recovery phases, UN HQs and, in particular, UNDP (ERD) and OCHA should support UN RC's and UN CT's efforts in:
 - Developing stand-by agreements with donors for up-front cash funding for the RC (lead agency: OCHA)
 - Understand the role and comparative advantage of UNDAC teams, and how to make use of UN response mechanisms, such as MCDU; Pisa Warehouse; SUMA; CERF, (lead agency: OCHA)
 - Being aware of who is who on disaster management within the UN System.
 - Providing a module and checklist on Disaster Management Training (DMT), (lead agency: UNDP/ERD).
 - Formulating a training programme for national journalists to ensure that they assume their key role within Early Warning and other preparedness mechanisms (lead agency: UNDP/ERD with PAHO/WHO support).
 - Strengthening the RC's Office's public information capacity.
 - Enhancing UNCT efforts towards ensuring sustainable levels of livelihood through productive activities (lead agency: UNDP/ERD).

- UN HQs, again with special mention of OCHA and UNDP/ERD, to:
 - Engage UN CT in the development of mechanisms for the UN to identify and make rapid use of helicopters in the regional (lead agency: OCHA)
 - Expand UNDAC regional membership and identify UNDAC members with relevant information processing expertise and experience (lead agency: OCHA).
 - Provide each member of the UN CT with relevant staffing support (technical, administrative, public information, etc.) when a disaster strikes.
 - Undertake a lessons learned exercise on SUMA in the context of the response to Mitch. PAHO/WHO considering the possibility for the entire UN System to adopt the SUMA system.
 - Co-operate with ECLAC in fine tuning its existing assessment methodology to further enhance the UN CT's advocacy role on behalf of social sectors.
- DMT must be a permanent team that meets on a regular basis and acts as an advisory body to the RC on issues related to preparedness, prevention and mitigation, and ensures that all security measures are followed, per UN Security Manual. To facilitate this, UNDP/OCHA and relevant UN HQs to provide a manual and checklist for DMT operations. It should further strengthen its role in information management as an input for recovery needs, and its linkages to national information networks and NGOs. Finally, DMT should consider the inclusion of the Red Cross and key NGO umbrella groups, in addition to Government authorities.
- RC to consider adopting the “Emergency Core Group” and “Lead Agency” concepts, in early stages of emergency response, including RC, UNDP, PAHO, UNICEF and WFP, following the model established in Honduras
- UN CT to encourage transparent and participatory lessons learned exercises by all national and international actors and to assess the system and national needs for strengthening disaster reduction and management capacity through training, equipment and experienced staff.
- UNICEF/WFP to extend use of their communications network to all agencies on a cost-sharing basis enhancing DMT's disaster management capacity and UN CT security.
- The UN CT to maintain and improve the information management devices set-up during Mitch, with more analytical capacity and global perspective for preparedness and mitigation purposes.
- UN CT to ensure that current reconstruction efforts give priority to reintegrating families and to children, women and vulnerable groups, attract more attention to the situation in the autonomous areas, and establish a common strategy to strengthen Civil Society and local authorities – in accordance with current country programmes.

- Victims of Mitch, in particular children, women and the elderly need comprehensive psychological support to process their traumatic experiences. The UN CT may consider a joint proposal to relevant UN HQs (PAHO/WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, etc.)