

**BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION:  
THE CURRENT SITUATION OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND PREVENTION ACTIVITIES  
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

**Dr. Hugo Prado Monje  
Dr. Claude de Ville de Goyet**

**Emergency Preparedness Program  
Pan American Health Organization  
525 Twenty-third Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20037 U.S.A.**

**BACKGROUND**

Natural disasters are no strangers to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. In the last five years alone, earthquakes have struck Chile, Mexico, El Salvador and Ecuador. Some, like the 1985 Mexico tremor, with such devastating intensity that more than 10,000 persons died and thousands were left homeless. The crater of the Nevado del Ruiz Volcano erupted, burying the city of Armero, Colombia, and killing 23,000.

In 1988, Hurricane Gilbert left hundreds of

thousands without shelter in Jamaica before it lashed across Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula and struck the city of Monterrey. Two months later, Hurricane Joan left a trail of destruction from coast to coast in Nicaragua and other Central American countries. In 1989 Hurricane Hugo caused severe damage in the Caribbean, leaving thousands homeless and injured.

Table 1 shows the wide variety of disasters that threaten Latin America and the Caribbean.

YEAR	COUNTRY	TYPE OF DISASTER	Deaths
1970	Peru	Earthquake	66,797
1972	Nicaragua	Earthquake	10,000
1976	Guatemala	Earthquake	23,000
1980	Haiti	Hurricane (Allen)	220
1982	Mexico	Volcanic eruption	3,000
1985	Mexico	Earthquake	10,000
1985	Colombia	Volcanic eruption	23,000
1986	El Salvador	Earthquake	1,200
1988	Jamaica/Mexico	Hurricane (Gilbert)	295
1988	Nicaragua/others	Hurricane (Joan)	116
1989	Montserrat/others	Hurricane (Hugo)	50
1989	Venezuela	Floods	= =

**Table 1: Recent Major Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean.**