

**Finding 31: Projects approved by IHA for providing emergency assistance in the aftermath of the hurricane were consistent with the needs of the affected populations and with other donor efforts.**

According to its mandate, IHA can provide funding to appeals that correspond to certain criteria of eligibility. Within its operating structure, IHA has established a set of criteria that help guide its decision-making process.

Appeals are assessed in consultation with 1) CIDA officials, 2) DFAIT personnel, and 3) representatives of the Canadian mission overseas.

The selection of proposals takes into consideration an institutional assessment, that is the organization's capacity and available funding, as

well as a convincing needs assessment for emergency assistance, and, secondly, a project assessment. The later examines such indicators as: the organization's relief experience, the consistency and relevance of the project, local delivery capacities, etc.

In the case of Mitch, data indicates that a consultative process was established between DFAIT, Canadian field missions in the affected countries, and CIDA personnel. Consultations followed project selection criteria. Documentary and field data indicates that the mix of projects approved by IHA did not duplicate other donor efforts but rather complemented them. This is in part due to the NGOs linkages in the field and their knowledge of local needs. Overall, projects approved by IHA demonstrated consistency and non-duplication with national and international efforts.

**Considerations in selection of proposals**

Assessment of the humanitarian need  
Capacity of the organization and its direct involvement in the project  
Other donor response  
Feasibility and security  
Administrative considerations  
Funds available

**Finding 32: In the process of approving emergency relief proposals, IHA's response was relatively quick but some indicate it could have been better.**

IHA's mandate is to provide emergency assistance in a timely, coordinated and appropriate manner. In the case of a natural disaster, IHA has latitude to respond within a few hours through established channels such as the Red Cross, UN agencies and NGOs that are operational on site. (For complex emergencies, the process requires more appraisal.)

Some NGOs expressed frustration with the project selection and approval process which they believe could have been undertaken in a more timely manner. The consultation process for project approval and funding were undertaken between November 9 – 11, 1998, almost two weeks after Mitch entered the Honduran mainland. Initially, NGOs were unsure if IHA had funds available for projects. When it was announced that IHA had funds available, NGOs had to submit proposals in a short period of time.

Furthermore, according to data collected, IHA responded to the international appeals of the International Red Cross and of PAHO on November 6, 1998, that is nine days after impact. Considering that IHA has the capacity to answer appeals within hours, this time lapse raised some questions about the timeliness of its response.

**Finding 33: During the emergency phase of Hurricane Mitch, CIDA authorized the reallocation of bilateral funds to support emergency efforts. This proved to be an effective way to provide funding to CIDA field representatives for emergency initiatives.**

As information on damages was received from the various managers of CIDA projects in Honduras and Nicaragua, CIDA representatives in Tegucigalpa and Managua needed ready funds to be able to respond to needs as they emerged. Authorization was provided to the field to allow funds originally allocated to bilateral projects to be spent on emergency relief. The goods provided were primarily basic food, but also included medication, evacuation and transport facilities, water purification tablets or chlorine, and basic

sanitation supplies. Funds were also made available in a timely manner through the Canada Fund and the Counterpart Fund. This assistance helped to address the immediate needs of vulnerable populations.

This scheme proved to be effective for various reasons. CIDA's internal contracting procedures are at times slow, and quick access to project funds allowed Canada to respond in a timely way to emergency needs. In addition, authorization was given to a CIDA Hull officer from the Americas Branch to make decisions, which allowed for fast turn around time. For example, implementation by CARE of the RELU was authorized by CIDA while a CIDA Hull officer was in the field. However, CIDA field officers were still restricted, since their signing authority for projects remained at the same level as during normal operations. During the emergency phase, field officers were required to seek approval from CIDA Hull for initiatives surpassing that amount.

**Finding 34: Although technical standards exist for disaster relief, there are no generally accepted logistical standards.**

We have searched for benchmarks on disaster relief and in general we have found technical standards for what is required in terms of health, shelter, nutrition and so forth. However there are seemingly no logistical standards or guidelines on how to provide relief. Without targets of this nature it is difficult to assess performance of relief efforts and to develop lessons for the future.

**Finding 35: In order to respond effectively in an emergency situation such as Hurricane Mitch, CIDA needs to mobilize and utilize operational NGOs to complement its own efforts.**

Early on in the Hurricane Mitch situation, it became apparent that CIDA did not have the resources to do everything required. CIDA is a coordinating unit, not an operational unit, and needs to contract or otherwise obtain operational capability. In this case, CIDA needed to contract a coordinating organization quickly – an NGO or INGO that had experience and a trustworthy reputation. CIDA had a number of NGOs from which to select the coordinating organization for the ACT. These included other partners with whom CIDA has worked, as well as emerging “non-formal” NGOs that were involved in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch.

The choice of the Canadian Red Cross, while slow, proved a good choice. Despite the risks the Canadian Red Cross associated with implementing the ACT (see Finding 29: ), it received positive, nationwide publicity for its role in CIDA's emergency relief efforts. Such publicity gives an organization an opportunity to highlight its capabilities and trustworthiness and to raise corporate donations. For this reason, the selection of an NGO as the focal point for disaster relief contains an important political dimension. And, since CIDA may be in a similar situation in the future, it should have an objective NGO selection mechanism place.

**Finding 36: The military support provided through the DART and the ACT was seen as a positive aspect of the humanitarian effort. However, this is a costly way to provide assistance, and the use of military support needs to be used prudently.**

In an agreement with DND, CIDA resolved to pay the costs of flights transporting humanitarian assistance to Central America. At \$100,000 per flight, for 21 flights from November 8 - December 5, 1998 (to La Ceiba, Managua, and one to San Salvador), this came to \$2M. This figure indicates that the military option might not be efficient. Other options exist for acquisition and distribution of emergency goods. The purchase of goods either locally or from the region provides the same goods at a lower cost. In addition, NGOs interviewed indicate that there is no need for the military when security problems of airlifted goods is not an issue.

NGOs appreciated these resources only if they did not cost them. Since the total amount of aid money available has not changed, it is reasonable to assume that the cost of the relief flights will mean a reduction in available funds somewhere down the line.

**Finding 37: During the emergency phase of Hurricane Mitch, international agencies provided supplies that in some cases could have been better provided by local or regional suppliers.**

During the period from November 15 to December 12, 1998, the Canadian Red Cross, through the ACT, coordinated with NGOs to transport over 1 million pounds of supplies to Central America. An undetermined amount of supplies were also transported by organizations not utilizing the ACT. Supplies transported by the ACT included food, medicines, and water purification supplies.

However, evidence suggests that other options were used effectively by some NGOs in the field. These include acquisition of supplies, especially food, through local sources in the immediate period after Hurricane Mitch. For example, the NGO *Vecinos Mundiales*, operating in Tegucigalpa, Honduras was able to buy food locally and distribute it with the help of volunteers. In the first week of the emergency, approximately 6,000 to 7,000 families benefited from the food distribution efforts of the NGO. Data collected from international NGOs operating in Nicaragua demonstrates that many Canadian NGOs provided immediate funds to their local counterparts for the purchase of local emergency supplies. For example, a few days after the impact of Mitch, a local umbrella NGO, *Consejo de organizaciones de ex-combatientes de guerra* (partner of Oxfam Quebec), received funds to buy local food and medical supplies to distribute in various municipalities in the department of Esteli.

Acquisition of supplies from the region is found to be beneficial for three main reasons. First, by acquiring supplies locally or in the region, assistance to the country is delivered quickly. Second, purchases from local markets supports those markets, thus contributing to the recuperation of the local markets. Third, purchasing locally minimizes the risk of lowering local prices of similar goods.

Overall mobilization of Canadian resources through the Canadian Red Cross worked well. However, some Canadian NGOs found it more cost-effective, appropriate and timely to bypass a centralized system and go directly to their partners in the affected countries. Canada's method of resource mobilization received mixed reviews in the NGO community. Centralized distribution systems help some people, but it is often more cost-effective to provide funding. When it is in the proper hands on the ground, money is the best way of helping disaster victims (e.g. Cardinal Léger used this method effectively during the Mitch emergency).

The Canadian public's response to Hurricane Mitch disaster raises the issue of the appropriateness of contributions. The issue lies in the discrepancy between what is needed to assist victims in a practical, effective, and timely manner and what is actually donated by the public. The preference for cash donations, made known by the Canadian Red Cross during its emergency appeal, often went unheeded by individuals and organizations, whose preference was to send in-kind goods (e.g. tinned food, clothing). Some donations were inappropriate (as in the case of a donation of winter boots), or less than practical (as in the case of tinned tuna that required the additional purchase of can openers). In-kind contributions also have costs associated with them, terms of both time and money for transport. NGOs in the field noted that the management of in-kind contributions was challenging. Such donations, although well-meaning, did not necessarily provide the assistance required to provide populations with timely relief.

By tapping into the experiences learned through the emergency response to Hurricane Mitch regarding priorities and appropriateness of donations, CIDA and its partners can make the public more aware of what constitutes an appropriate donation, thus maximizing its emergency relief efforts in the future.

### 3.4 Coordination and Communication

**Finding 38: In responding to an emergency such as Hurricane Mitch, the many points of communication make coordination extremely complex.**

In an initiative such as this, in which multiple players are struggling to provide quick emergency relief to vulnerable populations, there are many complications that can arise due to coordination issues. Each participating organization must face its own internal politics and challenges, while working in dire and rushed circumstances. Exhibit 3.6 shows the key players in the emergency relief initiative and what each was responsible for. Each group feels that it had a major task in coordinating its piece of the initiative. Each has capacities that supported their efforts, and others that inhibited their efforts.

**Exhibit 3.6 Key Players and their Roles**

PLAYER	RESPONSIBLE FOR COORDINATING
Red Cross	ACT, Canadian NGOs
Governments of Nicaragua, Honduras	National coordination of disaster relief
DND	DART
CIDA field	In-country CIDA activities
IHA	Overall Canadian humanitarian assistance
DFAIT	Humanitarian assistance, foreign policy and DND involvement
UNDP	Multilateral donors

**Finding 39: The governments of Honduras and Nicaragua did not have the capacity to prepare for or manage disasters.**

National and local governments in Honduras and Nicaragua lacked human resource capacity, the infrastructure, and the money to coordinate the overall relief effort. Other groups, such as donors, multilaterals, and NGOs tried to fill the coordination vacuum. However, filling the vacuum is no substitute for national capacity.

There is a wide international consensus on the need and importance of building national capacities with respect to disaster management. This includes aspects such as early warning, early needs assessment, responding to disaster through supply management, evacuation and transportation, for the short term or emergency period. There is also a shared opinion, from multilateral, bilateral and national countries affected by the hurricane that there is a need to raise the public's awareness in disaster prone countries.<sup>3</sup>

These concerns were acknowledged and addressed throughout the Mitch crisis. To better coordinate donor responses to reconstruction in the affected countries, the Inter-American Development Bank convened a Consultative Group Meeting for the Reconstruction and Transformation of Central America in Washington, on December 10-11, 1998. A member of the Canadian delegation noted that:

*We must commend governments, private sectors and civil society organisations for the tremendous effort they have made to respond to the needs of the community during this disaster. But the hurricane has served to point out the very real limits to their present capabilities. Governments and social organisations are hard pressed to respond to immediate needs and to address longer-term issues (such as poverty and environmental degradation)."<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> Santo Domingo Conference on the Evaluation of the Response and Preparedness to Hurricanes George and Mitch

<sup>4</sup> *Talking points: Canadian support for emergency relief and reconstruction*, IDB Consultative Group Meeting

**Finding 40: CIDA, DFAIT and DND had clear roles and responsibilities in the Hurricane Mitch disaster. This contributed to the effective coordination between the three, although some challenges did exist.**

The role of DND is articulated in its mandate for peacekeeping. One aspect of this is its responsibility for DART and ACT. DFAIT plays a policy role, acts as ministerial liaison, and coordinates the use of DND in humanitarian assistance. CIDA is responsible for coordinating Canadian humanitarian assistance efforts, within CIDA and with key government agencies.

There are a variety of managerial mechanisms that are part of preparedness that facilitate coordination. These include procedures, training, policies, conferences, sharing of past experiences, and identification and utilization or integration of lessons learned. By creating a common understanding of how best to respond to disasters, one reduces the requirement for numerous meetings. Building preparedness capacity allows coordination to be done in a more efficient and effective manner.

Informal relations among CIDA, DFAIT and DND have been good and this helps coordination in times of pressure. However, frequent and regular personnel turnover mean that knowledge and experience are lost when there is no plan for succession.

**Finding 41: The various CIDA players coping with the emergency response to Hurricane Mitch felt they had clear roles and responsibilities.**

Four components of CIDA played key roles in responding to Hurricane Mitch emergency: Bilateral Desk in Americas Branch, Communications Division, IHA, and CIDA field representatives.

Results from interviews with CIDA staff suggest that individuals were aware of their roles and responsibilities during the emergency phase of a disaster such as Hurricane Mitch, and that, for the most part, each responded appropriately and assumed responsibilities as they arose.

During Hurricane Mitch, the mandate of CIDA's Communications Desk was to convey information on the Agency's activities to the media, the public, to the Minister of International Cooperation and parliamentarians. Interviews indicated they fulfilled this mandate.

The role of CIDA field officers during the emergency included:

- Familiarization with the local coordinating body (government, UN, Red Cross) and with Canadian NGOs and their activities in the country;
- Monitoring the performance and capacity of the host government, the UN agencies, Canadian NGOs, and acting as liaison with the Canadian Embassy;
- Providing information on needs assessment, infrastructure damage, and capacities to receive and transport supplies;
- Being aware that the Canada Fund and Counterpart Fund can provide funds for relief;
- Regularly reporting to all CIDA Hull divisions involved and concerned by the emergency;
- Identifying opportunities where follow-up activities could be undertaken in disaster preparedness/mitigation; and,
- Lobbying host government to undertake specific actions.

The Bilateral Desk fully participated in all aspects of the initiative and felt it carried out appropriate roles and responsibilities – from participation in the reconnaissance mission to mobilization of resources in emergency and reconstruction.

**Finding 42: CIDA's involvement in bilateral and multilateral meetings allowed Agency field representatives to obtain and share information with key players at the early stages of the emergency.**

Sharing information during the initial phases of an emergency such as Hurricane Mitch is crucial. In Honduras and Nicaragua, there were no focal points for the gathering and compilation of different types of data required to assess damages and needs, a fundamental component of effective disaster management.

In Honduras and Nicaragua, some donors have their own internal disaster preparedness capacities (e.g. USAID-OFDA, the UN). In the early aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, however, few coordination mechanisms existed between donors with respect to disaster response. In this respect, Canada's participation in early information meetings with the World Bank, IADB, USAID, ministerial officials, and others provided information to Canada on damages inflicted, needs required, and initial donor responses initiated. This helped to reduce duplication of responses by donors in Honduras, including Canada. Certain zones and sectors of intervention were identified.

In Nicaragua, Canada participated in UNDP led meetings to coordinate donors and share initial information. Present at those gatherings were the UNDAC (United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination) teams whose mandate was to compile data for needs assessment and damages. Despite Canada's participation in these meetings, it was concluded that the Canadian initiatives relied on CIDA's NGO network in Nicaragua. Evidence suggests that this decision did not hinder Canada's response to the emergency in Nicaragua.

This raises the issue of where CIDA should invest to increase its access to information during a period of emergency. Although coordination with multilateral agencies and other bilateral donor agencies is not precluded, CIDA may want to consider additional sources.

**Finding 43: Meetings were a key mechanism for coordinating the various actors and their initiatives. For some groups this became a drain on resources and time.**

During the emergency phase of Hurricane Mitch, a series of meetings were held between CIDA, DFAIT, and DND, and others with CIDA and NGOs. These served to coordinate efforts, clarify roles and responsibilities, and generally keep players informed as to what was occurring. Although these were an important component for coordination and information sharing, meetings have to be used in a judicious manner. For groups with limited HR capacity, meetings drain resources and consume time that may be needed for other important aspects of a quick response exercise.

**Finding 44: Although the use of the Internet facilitated the sharing of information on Hurricane Mitch across international boundaries, no coordinated system exists to use this technology to its best advantage during an emergency response.**

The advent of the Internet has given both individuals and organizations the ability to create web pages on limitless topics, and allows those with computers to access web pages and information from all over the world. Hurricane Mitch generated a myriad of web pages and references to the disaster – a search for the words "Hurricane Mitch" on Microsoft Internet Explorer returns a list of over 5,000 web pages. Creators of these pages ranged from individuals who posted information sporadically onto their sites (and whose reliability of data is not always assured), to NGOs, bilateral and multilateral organizations who systematically updated their web sites to keep interested browsers informed with reliable data.

One concern that emerged during Hurricane Mitch was the reliability and consistency of data that was available on various sites. Since anyone can create an Internet site, and there is no indication as to the legitimacy of information posted on such sites, the public has no way of knowing whether information is valid or not. Another concern is the lack of access to information for many people and communities, directly affected by the hurricane (i.e. breakdown of the electrical infrastructure, cost of computers). This

limits early information gathering and needs assessments. The problem of language (i.e. availability of information in Spanish) was also raised.

Although it would be a Herculean task to coordinate all sites dealing with Hurricane Mitch, coordination of official sites (e.g. OCHA, IFRC, UNDP, multilateral organizations, and bilateral donor organizations such as CIDA) would help ensure that the public and donor organizations have access to some reliable data during an emergency. Several initiatives are attempting to organize data posted on the Internet and the Web related to disaster – Alertnet and ReliefWeb, for example, have both been providing valuable up-to-date information on Mitch throughout the different phases of the disaster. Full donor coordination of this technology remains to be developed.

**Finding 45: There is increasing interest in the potential benefits of CARE's i2K system as a tool for coordinating humanitarian assistance information.**

The i2K system, a software package developed by CARE Canada, links the supply and demand of relief goods – it provides a link between organizations in Canada who have goods to offer as part of a relief effort, and organizations in those countries that needed assistance. The software is retrieved from an Internet site and requires a password to access. Hurricane Mitch was the first time the i2K software was used in support of a disaster relief operation.

Despite the promise of the i2K system, interview data suggests that more work needs to be done by CARE and the Canadian community in order to realize its full value and benefit. Interviews with informants in Canada, Honduras and Nicaragua revealed a limited knowledge of the existence and use of the i2K software system. Some had heard of it, some expressed high regard for the initiative, and others who were familiar with the software felt that it was not yet as user-friendly as it could be. While the potential of the i2K system was not realized in this crisis, it has great potential as a coordinating and information-sharing tool for the future.

**Finding 46: The response to Hurricane Mitch provides an example of how diverse groups – civil society, government and military– can work together to attain a common goal. It also provides valuable experience with which to develop better coherence in the future.**

The response to Hurricane Mitch demonstrated the abilities of different organizations to coordinate efforts. DART was noted for its support to NGOs, local governments and health departments. ACT enabled the Red Cross to work effectively with other NGOs as well as with DND. CIDA coordinated efforts with DND, NGOs, and DFAIT. Other NGOs that did not participate with CIDA and still worked in a “smoke-stack” fashion, each coordinating its own efforts, but not integrating with each other.

In Canada today several committees have been formed to coordinate preparedness: NGO committee, the JFT Force and others are trying to integrate functional areas for better response to disaster relief. This is in line with the OECD study, Oslo, DND policy papers on disaster preparation. However, as the OECD study indicates, we are just at the beginning of understanding how to coordinate and integrate these groups into a coherent approach.

**Finding 47: Some progress in being made in learning how to integrate military approaches and humanitarian assistance approaches for emergency response.**

The combined efforts of CIDA and DND to bring timely and effective relief to the La Ceiba region of Honduras are perceived to have been successful. Each organization brought its competitive advantage – CIDA its extensive knowledge and experience in humanitarian assistance in developing countries, DND its logistical support and military rigour. Together, they worked to provide assistance to vulnerable populations.

This combined initiative raised an important issue that was noted by several informants of this study. DART is not a multi-discipline team, but purely military. Although it does not appear that the Canadian

response was hindered in a serious way because of this, there was a need for a non-military sensitivity in some instances. For example, the DART team did not have Spanish capability (with the exception of one individual who was married to a Honduran woman). This caused some difficulties in communication, especially between the Canadian doctors and their patients, who relied on interpreters to relay information.

OECD recommendations and conclusions from the PAHO conference held in Santo Domingo in February 1999, amongst other studies, point to the increased awareness of the need for coordination between the humanitarian civilian sector and the military sector. Military involvement should be considered in the light of its unique capacities, that is, security, logistics, reconnaissance and intelligence, and so forth. Because of its size and technical capacities, the military can react more quickly than the civilian sector to massive needs and large-scale disasters such as Mitch. However, civilian players have demonstrated a comparative advantage in providing assistance more quickly, because of their existing presence at the disaster location and their knowledge of affected populations. Military assets should be deployed when civilian capacities are over stretched, or when security assistance is required. Furthermore, civilian groups should guide the military as to where to best focus and integrate its efforts with other relief initiatives.

### ***3.5 Distributing Resources***

**Finding 48: In general, CIDA focussed its emergency relief efforts on those areas where it could provide a timely and effective distribution of resources to vulnerable populations.**

Honduran and Nicaraguan beneficiaries, including the municipal and regional authorities, vulnerable populations, and the local military, consider CIDA's projects during the emergency phase to be an important component of relief efforts. Interviews with municipal and regional authorities from the Valle del Aguan stated that Canadian assistance helped that zone to cope with the immediate health needs of affected populations. Distribution of emergency food rations through diverted project funding helped feed people who had lost everything. In Nicaragua, immediate disbursements from the Canada-Nicaragua Counterpart Fund allowed Canadian NGOs such as SUCO, Save the Children, CARE and their local partners to provide medication, food and tools to the populations affected by the impact of the hurricane.

In this initiative, CIDA used its previous experience and contacts to provide relief quickly. In its choice of La Ceiba and its use of engineering firms and NGOs that it had worked with previously, CIDA called upon groups with which it had a positive working relationship. As such, there was a level of trust and confidence, a familiarity with project areas in which they were working, and knowledge of the local authorities, their capacities, strengths and weaknesses. This helped ensure that resources were distributed in a way that CIDA was comfortable with, and that goods got to the most needy populations without the danger of diversion of funds or politicization of aid distribution.

**Finding 49: The DART initiative represented an important contribution to the distribution of Canadian relief resources. However, it is limited in scope.**

DART, as part of the JTF CAM, provided unique, rapid humanitarian assistance in the north Atlantic region of La Ceiba in areas where CIDA had existing bilateral projects as well as to isolated communities in the region. These efforts redirected and mobilized resources to provide emergency help in a timely and effective manner, as well as providing assistance through its field hospital, supplying emergency treatments, as well as preventive vaccinations and support to provide vector control. The local military in the region was also supportive of the work carried out by the DART, since the local civil defence resources had been exhausted soon after the emergency initiatives in Honduras began.

DART was highly visible. It provided first rate health care assistance, water and sanitation. It responded to needs as they arose, went beyond the "call of duty," and demonstrated flexibility within its capacities. DART put a personal face on Canadian humanitarian aid efforts and was viewed very positively by beneficiaries.



However, due to its structure, DART has very limited response capability, and highly technical and costly approaches to humanitarian relief. Its water purification system, for example, is significantly more expensive than chlorine tablets. The team assumed that people would know how to use supplies provided (e.g. children used water bags as toys while drinking water from a stream). The DART is also not an independent unit that can be deployed on its own – it did not, for example have helicopters or local language capacity.

**Finding 50: The availability of helicopters provided by JTCA helped the distribution capabilities of Canadian relief efforts to vulnerable populations.**

Overall, Canada's response to Hurricane Mitch in Honduras and Nicaragua was well received and Canada got a lot of positive feedback for with respect to distribution of resources. This was particularly true in the case of the five helicopters DND used in La Ceiba. Although helicopters were a small part of Joint Task Force Central America, they played an important role in providing emergency assistance to vulnerable populations. During their time in La Ceiba, the helicopters were used for various tasks, including transport and evacuation of vulnerable populations, and transportation of water and food to areas that were left isolated by the destruction of the road infrastructure. In certain cases, some of these areas had not been previously contacted. In other cases, the DART was and remains the only source of contact and emergency relief to isolated populations.

**Finding 51: The DART exit strategy followed existing procedures that were modified by the nature of the disaster and was supported by CARE Canada. This allowed for the continuity of distribution of resources to those most in need.**

As the time approached for the DART to exit Honduras, it deployed its routine exit strategy. The DART handed over existing projects and operations to the CIDA-designated humanitarian agency, CARE Canada, for "longer-term recovery and reconstitution" (DND, 1998). Certain issues arose, however, about what to do with supplies that went unused, and what equipment transported from Canada could or should be left behind. In the past, equipment was not left in the recipient country, since previous experiences in which components of the DART were involved were political disputes (e.g. the field hospital in Rwanda) and "what group gets what and why" became an issue. However, as Mitch was a natural disaster, the DART decided that some equipment could be left behind – this included a canvas tent and boxes of medical equipment that students of a local nursing school inventoried and distributed to appropriate locations throughout the region. All this was supported by CARE Canada through the Regional Emergency Logistics Unit (RELU).

**Finding 52: Evidence from Honduras and Nicaragua indicates that the Canadian response was able to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations. However, concern remains for isolated communities who have not received follow-up contact after the initial emergency phase.**

During the DART exercise in La Ceiba, Canadian soldiers went beyond their original mandate to provide emergency relief to isolated communities in the region of La Moquistia and Cabo de Dios. In addition, the CIDA Guayape project in Olancho, in conjunction with the local Catholic Church, approached the southern end of this area. Both initiatives provided water and food packages to vulnerable populations. Individuals in these populations included people whose houses had been washed away by the flooding, whose sources of water were no longer safe, and who did not have means to reach communities outside of their own.

Since this contact with the Canadian military, however, interviewees indicate that no contact has been made with many of these communities. After the DART exit, there remains the need to distribute supplies to vulnerable populations in isolated areas. It is not clear whose responsibility this is or how to carry it out.