



## **CARIBBEAN DISASTER EMERGENCY RESPONSE AGENCY**

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### **MESSAGE: Update on Flooding Events in Belize associated with the passage of Tropical Depression #16 as of October 28, 2008**

#### **THE EVENT**

Rains associated with the passage of Tropical Depression 16 during the period October 15 -17, 2008 have resulted in widespread flooding across several districts in Belize. Flood waters have reportedly affected 97 villages and are expected to continuing rising in areas of the Belize, Cayo, Corozal and Orange Walk Districts well into the month of November.

The Cayo District has been significantly impacted and on October 22 was declared a Disaster Area by the Honorable Dean Barrow, Prime Minister of Belize.

Tropical Depression No. 16 (TD 16), threatened Honduras, Guatemala and Belize and made landfall in northern Honduras on Thursday, 16 October 2008. The remnants of TD 16 caused widespread rainfall across Belize and life threatening floods along the Mopan and Macal Branches of the Belize River and along the entire Belize River Valley area affecting some 29 communities across the river valley. Communities along the Sibun River were also affected including Gracie Rock and Freetown Sibun.

This system also exacerbated the already flooded Rio Hondo River in the north, cutting off communities including San Antonio, San Roman, Douglas and Santa Cruz and impacting on 14 communities overall in the Orange Walk District. In the Corozal District, Caledonia has been the most severely impacted to date.

#### **SITUATION UPDATE:**

##### **Declaration of Disaster Area**

The Prime Minister, the Honorable Dean Barrow, declared the area of the Cayo District most impacted by the floods a disaster area on 22 October 2008. The disaster areas are as follows: Billy White, Branch Mouth, Bullett Tree, Calla Creek, Cristo Rey, Duck Run 1, Clarissa Falls, More Tomorrow, Paslow Falls, Plantain Sucker, Santa Familia and Spanish Lookout.

The status of the other parts of the country, that are currently experiencing floods, Orange Walk and Belize River Valley will be determined after the preliminary assessment of those areas.

##### **Population Affected**

The National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO) has reported that initial assessments have indicated a total of 16,525 people living in the Belize, Cayo, Corozal and Orange Walk Districts have been affected and approximately 814 homes in 97 districts have been flooded. The number of homes flooded is expected to increase significantly, particularly in the Belize and Orange Walk Districts as waters continue to rise

## **Shelterees**

Many of the displaced families are staying with families and those in shelters have been estimated at 311 as of October 27, 2008.

All persons in shelters are being given three meals a day. Relief Supply Teams were dispatched to the affected areas with food packages and water since October 19, 2008. As of 22 October relief supplies were issued for one week and two weeks supply of food is currently being distributed in the affected areas..

## **Roads/Bridges**

Several roads are closed primarily due to inaccessibility as a result of flood water or damaged culverts. On October 19, Ministry of Works (MOW) closed the Roaring Creek Bridge due to rising waters of some 22 inches. The entrance to Benque Viejo was closed temporarily on October 22, due to being under two feet of water. These sites were manned by the Police and Transport personnel to ensure safety.

There was no road access into the entire Calla Creek area and NEMO has been providing evacuation and safe crossings by boat. In San Ignacio the wooden bridge was under up to approximately 15 feet of water. Water levels rose into the market and football field areas. Water in that area has receded significantly.

The Iguana Creek Bridge to Spanish Lookout is still under water and will more than likely remain that way for the next week or two. Crossing at this location is being provided by private persons from the Mennonite Communities with police presence to ensure safety.

The MOW continues to monitor the roads and bridges status and advise on closure or otherwise.

## **Agriculture**

The Agriculture Sector has reported significant damage to farmers who have suffered losses to crops particularly Corn, Beans, vegetables, root crops, papaya and rice.

## **NATIONAL RESPONSE:**

### **Search and Rescue Teams**

As a precautionary measure from October 17, 2008, the Coast Guard, Fisheries and other crafts as well as search and rescue teams were strategically prepositioned in villages in the river valleys to provide quick evacuation in the event of flash floods.

Vessel operations have continued primarily to support evacuation of people, distribution of relief supplies and damage assessments. All official vessels carry life vest for all passengers. Subsequent to donations of approximately 30 life vests; life vests are being made available to private vessels as well.

### **Relief Supplies:**

More than five thousand persons have been issued relief supplies across the affected areas. The Red Cross and many other local organizations have contributed to supporting these efforts.

Distribution centres have been established in Belize Rural and Orange Walk. These centres will house relief supplies including water, food, beddings, medical kits/medicines etc. to service four major "zones" in those areas. It is anticipated that the flooding condition will remain for the next two-three weeks minimum.

**Health:**

A number of Medical Teams were deployed across the country; two north, four in the Belize Rural area and two in the Calla Creek/Bullet Tree Area. Reported conditions of interest include fever and cough, skin infections and a few cases of diarrhea. An estimated 910 persons have reportedly received medical attention as of October 27, 2008.

A Water purification system was set up October 21, 2008, with the support of the Red Cross in Calla Creek. A second system was set up the following day in Bullet Tree. There is also a mobile purification system in the Belize River Valley as well; another available for dispatch if necessary.

NEMO has distributed 600 collapsible water containers to assist the three affected sections of the country in an effort to lessen the possibility of water borne diseases. In addition, chlorination tablets and some medicine were issued.

Belize Defence Force soldiers were deployed on 23/10/08 to help with clean up and recovery in the Calla Creek area.

**REGIONAL RESPONSE:**

The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) has remained in contact with NEMO throughout the event.

The CDERA Coordinator is scheduled to visit Belize early next week for an on the ground look at the impact and to meet with NEMO and other Government Officials to discuss assistance required among other matters.

CDERA will continue to provide updates on this event as necessary.

**NEEDS**

Damage and needs assessments are ongoing. The main humanitarian needs identified at this time are.

- a. Water
- b. Baby Food
- c. Pampers
- d. Medicines
- e. Bedding – Mattress, Blankets, Mosquito Nets, Sleeping Bags etc.
- f. Rain Gear – Rain Coats and Rubber Boots
- g. Cleaning and Sanitary supplies

A preliminary needs list is identified below pending a detailed assessment for the entire country.

<b>Serial</b>	<b>Needs</b>	<b>Estimates of Quantity Required</b>
01	<b>Food</b>	2 to 4 wks
02	<b>Water</b>	2 to 4 wks
03	<b>Baby Food</b>	2 to 4 wks  (7,000 children approx.)
04	<b>Blankets</b>  <b>Sleeping equipment</b>  <b>Mosquito Nets</b>	20,000
05	<b>Chlorine Tablets</b>	Quantities to be confirmed
06	<b>Water Purification Equipment</b>	6
07	<b>Water Storage Containers</b>	5000  (5 gals.)
08	<b>ULV Spraying Machine</b>	Quantities to be confirmed
09	<b>Larvacide</b>	Quantities to be confirmed
10	<b>Medical Kit</b>	700 - 800 families
11	<b>Kitchen and Eating utensils</b>	3, 000 families
12	<b>Cleaning and Sanitary supplies</b>	3,000 families
13	<b>Power Washers</b>	200 (avg. 5 per affected Village)
14	<b>Sheetrock</b>	Quantities to be confirmed
15	<b>PlyCem</b>	Quantities to be confirmed
16	<b>Agriculture products</b>	Quantities to be confirmed
17	<b>School Supplies</b>	2, 000 sets
18	<b>Rain Gear incl Rubber Boots</b>	4 - 5000 sets
19	<b>Other Household Items</b>	Quantities to be confirmed

**Contact:** CDERA Coordinating Unit 24 hour contact number is 246 425-0386

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