



c e d e p c a

CEDEPCA RESPONSE TO EARTHQUAKE CLUSTER IN SANTA ROSA, GUATEMALA

In response to the cluster of tremors that has lasted almost three months in the department of Santa Rosa, in eastern Guatemala, Cedepca will respond with psychosocial attention to strengthen the resilience of those affected emotionally and facilitate the search for how to move forward. The cost to attend 200 people is \$4,600.

Emergency Situation

Since July 19, 2011, Santa Rosa, a department in eastern Guatemala, has suffered a cluster of more than 4,200 tremors (more than 40 that could be felt strongly), that continues through the present in October. The most destructive day was September 19, when four successive and strong tremors of up to 5.8 on the Richter scale affected the department.

Many houses in the area are made of adobe (mud and straw) and therefore collapse easily. According to CONRED (The National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction), the strong tremors on September 19th resulted in 2,574 people affected; 2,180 evacuated, 1,930 in shelters, 15 wounded and one death. They also report 388 houses with varying degrees of damage. We believe that the numbers of affected persons and houses is even larger. On September 21, Guatemala's vice-president declared a state of calamity in Santa Rosa.



House of adobe mud and Straw destroyed by the earthquakes and daily tremors in Santa Rosa. Photo/Ana Paxtor con Cedepca

In addition to those who are in shelters, the general population is taking precautions and is sleeping in make-shift tents outside their houses for fear of another strong quake. The incessant tremors during almost three months are causing fear, anxiety, stress, post-traumatic stress, and unpleasant memories of the incidents each time another tremor hits.

The uncertainty is greater because of doubt of what is causing this cluster of tremors. The Jalpatagua fault line passes through Santa Rosa, but the epicenters are not following this fault. This incongruity makes geologists from CONRED believe that the cluster of tremors might be caused by overloaded underground bodies of water, and if so the tremors could continue during the rest of the rainy season that lasts through the end of October.



One of the oficial shelters in Cuilapa, Santa Rosa Photo/Ana Paxtor con Cedepca

Situation on the Ground

A representative of Cedepca visited several towns around Santa Rosa. There are several formal and informal shelters operating, and given that this is a localized emergency, there has been support by governmental and private organizations, mostly in the center of Cuilapa.

The fear, anxiousness, paralyzation, panic, sense of discouragement, and worry were strong. Physically, people reported feeling tension, colds, exhaustion, heart attacks, crying, vomiting, skin problems, and coughing. Material problems are houses that have been destroyed or are damaged in at risk of collapsing, the need to stay near houses to prevent theft, and muddy water that's not adequate to drink.

Cedepca proposes to work in two communities outside of Cuilapa: Agua Zarca and El Chilar. There are about 50 families between the two communities, less help is reaching these areas, and Cedepca can have a stronger impact.

Response

- Strengthen the resilience of those in crisis, helping them to work through their stress and training them to know to how to meet future risks.

“I feel the earth move – Saturday it shook all night, starting at midnight...that day we didn't sleep, and the movements stopped at 7am.” “The rains caused the San Juan river to come out of its banks, and the constant tremors have made the land loose so that our houses are at risk of collapsing.” “One woman was extremely shaken up, and she passed away.” “I sleep out on the street under a tarp, because we're afraid of the tremors.” These were comments from a few people during the visit to Santa Rosa.

Cedepca works using a method called Community-Based Psychosocial Service, where the process begins with telling our stories about what has happened, and finishes with the community searching for strategies of how to move forward. The process strengthens the ability of those who have suffered to dream and plan for the future; and it strengthens local leadership. The psychologist doesn't primarily provide individual psychological attention, but instead works with groups of children, groups of women, groups of men, and groups of youth do provide a space of community sharing of what has happened.

In addition, we will coordinate a community meal once a month during the three months of attention, to strengthen community unity, introduce Cedepca in the communities, and make a small contribution toward meeting the need for food in the communities.

Once this community finishes with the three month psychosocial attention, we will invite the community and church leaders to participate in continuing training with Cedepca on risk reduction, on providing psychosocial attention in emergencies, and on providing spiritual attention in emergencies. We hope to have a long-term relationship in the communities, and be able to work with trained community leaders to respond in future emergencies.



The psychologist for Cedepca's Disaster Ministry visiting to understand the situation in Cuilapa. Photo/Ana Paxtor Cedepca

BUDGET:

To attend 200 people in psychosocial attention during three months: \$3,600

To purchase food for three community meals: \$1,000

TOTAL: \$4,600