

**Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations**



**Office in Guatemala**

**THE ROLE OF FAO IN  
THE REHABILITATION  
OF RURAL  
LIVELIHOODS IN  
GUATEMALA POST  
TROPICAL STORM STAN**

## **THE ROLE OF FAO IN RESPONSE TO THE EFFECTS OF TROPICAL STORM “STAN” ON THE POOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES OF RURAL GUATEMALA**

In the beginning of October 2005 tropical storm “Stan” hit hard the western highlands and south coast of Guatemala, CEPAL has estimated that the storm caused US\$983 million worth of damage. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of October the Government of Guatemala declared a state of “national calamity” and from this moment on the United Nations System in Guatemala made an international appeal for emergency aid (Flash Appeal). The amount received by this appeal from donor governments to cover the emergency came to US\$21,985,844. FAO received nothing.



### ***FAO'S RESPONSE***

#### **1. Emergency Period.**

During the immediate aftermath of a disaster other agencies have the lead, especially in humanitarian response. During that period all FAO professional staff went to the field to review with the affected population the nature and extent of the damage to their Livelihoods. The results of that Rapid Rural Appraisal were immediately fed back to government policy makers, the UN System and served CEPAL in its evaluation of the impact of STAN. It also gave FAO visibility, enabling the other actors understand the agency's role and enabling the development of the follow up activities as listed below.

#### **2. Joint Programme of the United Nations System in Guatemala.**

UNDP received US\$3million in funds for the implementation of emergency shelters. Given that many of the shelters were implemented with national funds, the United Nations Fund for Development (UNDP) jointly with USAID (US Agency for International Development) and



in consultation with donors, implemented a more comprehensive programme of assistance to those who had lost their houses.



UNDP together with FAO, World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) carried out a complimentary programme to that of the provision of temporary housing. This involved the rehabilitation of the productive assets of the affected families, as well as the community infrastructure damaged by the storm. Each agency worked within the framework of its area of expertise but with a shared strategy and methodology.



Given its mandate and expertise the work of FAO was focused on the promotion of productive activities for the recovery of the economies of the families living in the temporary shelters, many of whom had not lost their houses but had lost their means of production. The work plan that was drawn up responded to a participatory process in which the affected families prioritized their demands that served as the basis for negotiating the offer of FAO and the other participating agencies. 7,760 affected families of San Marcos and Solola received: a) technical assistance for the recovery of their fields and the rehabilitation of their irrigation systems; b) training, giving priority to women especially those involved in off farm activities (handicrafts) and c) the re-provision of farmyard animals, mainly chickens.



FAO also provided policy advice and technical assistance to the Reconstruction Cabinet and Planning Secretariat on the actions that would most help in the reactivation of the affected rural economies and the generation of employment.

### 3. From within the Regular Programme.

In response to a request for assistance by the Guatemalan Government, FAO approved an emergency TCP “Emergency Aid for the Rehabilitation of the Agricultural Sector and the Small Producers and Fishermen most Affected by Tropical Storm STAN”. The implementation of this project allowed for the following activities:



**3.1.** At the end of October and during November FAO carried out joint TCEO and TCI damage evaluation missions that reviewed the agricultural sector, the problems of animal sanitation, as well as the preparation of proposals to facilitate the reconstruction efforts. The information generated by these missions on the effects caused by STAN on the national agricultural sector, facilitated the building of confidence in FAO's expertise by the government of Guatemala, especially MAGA and the development of working relationships with various donor agencies. This facilitated the preparation of seven project profiles that were presented to the donors. The projects outlined in section 4 are a reflection of these efforts.

**3.2.** The Rapid Rural Appraisal of the Impact of STAN on the Livelihoods of the food insecure and vulnerable rural population provided a base line for the organizations post STAN intervention strategies. This information plus the learning generated by the Food Security Programme of FAO in Guatemala funded by Spain has enabled FAO build up a rural intervention strategy based on the following elements:

- *Patio/Hogar:* Recovering and strengthening the traditional gardening practices of the rural families in which the land around the household has

always been used to produce, vegetables, fruits, herbs as well as chickens, turkeys, pigs and other small animals. This goes with simple improvements to the home that includes piped water, improved cooking stoves and the installation of grain storage silos, as well as food and nutritional education. This has traditionally been primarily a woman's space and is an ideal entry point to the organization of women.

- *Milpa*: This is the inherited farming system that historically has provided the rural families of Guatemala with their basic subsistence crops of maize, beans and squash. This system has been in decline over the past twenty years being seen as inefficient and associated with poor subsistence farmers. FAO is involved in rehabilitating this system through the promotion of a series of technologies based on agroforestry techniques associated with leguminous plants, maximizing soil cover with above all mulch, minimizing external inputs and the management of soil humidity. This system with the patio/hogar are the fundamentals of rural food security and once consolidated allow for.
- *Diversification*: Diversifying the farm into market orientated agriculture, especially with the use of irrigation, handicrafts, and various associated off farm employment activities. Increasing the productivity and efficiency of small holders and their families is key to the creation of a local development dynamic and that requires above all access to markets that can offer reasonable prices for labour and land intensive production systems such as vegetables.
- *Organization*: The organization of the local community goes hand in hand with the above processes requiring intensive training in both the relevant technological changes as well as the norms needed for successful object orientated organizations and self help groups especially those involved in such activities as savings and loan clubs etc. This requires a high level of investment in the formation of a multiplicity of local leadership.
- *Water Management*: the key to the successful emergence of a local development dynamic is the strategic management of the natural resource base starting with water. This is the one priority identified by all communities and the organization required to ensure its sustainability provides the basis for community watershed management.



- 3.3.** Ten irrigation systems were rehabilitated benefiting 210 families and putting back into production 36 hectares of vegetables. Twenty seven (27) quintals of improved open pollinated maize seed varieties were distributed amongst 90 leading small farmers who were able to produce 4,000 quintals of certified seed for sowing in May, the beginning of the maize planting cycle. In the same way 192 quintals of local varieties of open pollinated maize seed, 80 quintals of beans and 461 quintals of certified maize seed were also distributed.
- 3.4.** This TCP also enabled FAO support a newly nominated MAGA watershed team in the development of their emerging micro watershed programme, in the preparation of its strategic focus and the incorporation of the theme of risk management. For this purpose three studies were carried out: a) identify and profiling the programmes, projects and activities related to the management of watersheds throughout the country; b) identify and analyze the political institutional framework for the management of watersheds; and c) the preparation of a complementary strategy paper. These studies had generated for MAGA information that allows it to develop a policy framework, institutional restructuring and linkages with other actors in relation to watershed management.
- 3.5.** Also, by means of this project, FAO was able to assist MAGA in the development of a monitoring system that enables it to predict future harvest and identify potential crisis points in the agricultural system of the country.
- 3.6.** The project was also able to assist 18 fishermen, affected by STAN, in the construction of four fish ponds for shrimp production.



**3.7.** With the emergency TCP funds the following projects were prepared:

- i. *“Restauración de la capacidad productiva de los medios de vida de los pequeños caficultores de la Boca Costa afectados por la tormenta tropical Stan”* (Project requested by the Government of Guatemala.).
- ii. *“Rehabilitación de los activos productivos familiares en las comunidades damnificadas por la tormenta tropical Stan en la cuenca del río Cuilco”*

(Document prepared for the European Commission of Humanitarian Aid ECHO).

- iii. *“Restauración de activos de las familias vulnerables pobres afectadas por la tormenta tropical Stan en las cuencas del Lago de Atitlán y del Naranjo”.*
- iv. *Restauración de activos de las familias pobres afectadas por la tormenta tropical Stan en las cuencas del Río Coatán y Suchiate”.*



#### **4. Reconstruction with Transformation.**

In the early weeks after STAN the representation of FAO in Guatemala, with backing from TCPO, was involved in discussions with the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECI), the Swedish Embassy, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Government Reconstruction Secretariat, the Planning Secretariat and the UN System. This dialogue on post STAN medium to long term rehabilitation has resulted in the following projects, all of which are focus on the reconstruction of rural livelihoods.

*GCP/GUA/012/SPA:* The rehabilitation of the livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable families affected by tropical storm STAN in the watersheds of Lake Atitlán and the Naranjo river (US\$2,400,000). The main objective of this project is the recapitalization of the productive assets of those families affected by STAN. The focus is on improving livelihoods through improved agricultural techniques and the diversification of the diet, as well as the restoration of the production infrastructure that was damaged by the storm: roads, irrigation, eroded gullies, etc. This project covers 23 small watersheds, 200 communities with a total of 8,000 beneficiary families. The strategy is based on a livelihoods focus: an articulation of demand forming the basis for negotiating priorities and the development of community rehabilitation strategies. The project emphasizes the importance of the community as an organizational framework and, therefore, the training of community leaders. It has a life span of 18 months.

*OSRO/GUA/601/SWE:* The restoration of the livelihoods of the vulnerable rural poor affected by STAN in the watersheds of the Coatán and Suchiate rivers (US\$2,000,000). Again, the major objective of the project is the recovery of the levels of production and consumption that existed before the disaster, recovery of the productive and community infrastructure, a reduction of the physical vulnerability of the affected communities to future natural phenomena and assistance in the development of the capacity of local people and communities to influence the focus of development initiatives in their communities and municipalities. This project aims to benefit 4,000 vulnerable families affected by STAN in 71 communities in 19 local watersheds. This project is designed to last 24 months and its aim is to restore the previous livelihoods systems as the first step to a more sustainable development process.

*UTF/GUA/013/GUA:* The restoration of the livelihoods of the small coffee growers of the Pacific Coast affected by STAN. The main objective of this project is to contribute to the recovery of the agricultural base of ten campesino enterprises, producers of poor quality robusta coffee and also facilitate a reorientation of the agricultural economy of these organizations as well as help consolidate their social structure so as to enable them become socially successful and economically profitable enterprises. This project has a value of US\$300,000 and it is due to last one year.