

Earthquake in Ecuador 16 April 2016

Data:

- Epicentre between Pedernales and Cojimies
- 19 km depth, hence no Tsunami
- 7.8 on the Richter Scale
- 58 seconds
- Pedernales has 60,000 inhabitants, with many tourists over the weekends
- There is no alarm system for earthquakes or Tsunamis
- Affected the entire Pacific coast between the provinces of Guayas and Esmeraldas
- The worst affected region is the Province Manabi – Pedernales

Reflections:

1. In general there is no life or building insurance. Only the biggest buildings of businesses in Guayaquil, Manta, Portoviejo and Chone are insured.
2. This year there is no drinking water anywhere in the country – except in Cuenca and some place in the Sierra.
3. The water is called drinking water and is piped to the houses only two days a week, and cannot be drunk unless it has been boiled.
4. People have to buy water from tankers for washing, and in bottles for drinking.
5. The great majority of Ecuadorians aren't aware that that together with Columbia, Peru and Chile their country forms part of the Pacific Ring of Fire.
6. Many think that there are no earthquakes in Ecuador, that earthquakes are a problem of Japan or Chile.
7. No one lives, thinks, educates, builds or organises while taking earthquakes into consideration.
8. For this reason the chaos is greater than usual.
9. Since the government of Mahuad the country has not had its own currency, but uses the US dollar. So it cannot exercise its money policies as it thinks best, and in a situation like this it is critical.
10. In the last ten years the government has spent a great deal of money (partly out of its reserves) in order to haul it out of poverty and under-development. In the process it invested in basic infrastructure, e.g., streets, hospitals, schools, hydroelectric plants.

However:

- The state lacks an appreciable monetary reserves.
- The work is carried out very quickly and is now interrupted by the earthquake.
- More than two million Ecuadorians live outside the country and support their families with money, which they send from other countries, and with which they built their houses for the time of their return. Now these have collapsed.
- The earthquake has deprived many families of economic security and a future.

Needs and challenges:

The situation on 21 April 2016 is as follows:

1. The rotting of the corpses forces the government to evacuate the most affected places. Santo Domingo has become the centre for rescue, accommodation and first aid. It is feared that illnesses such as Yellow Fever, Rabies, Chincungaña and Zika will increase.
2. The places designated for burial are inadequate and mass graves are being prepared.
3. While the ruins are removed and the last corpses recovered, the survivors have to be cared for. They need accommodation, medical care, food, psychological support, etc.
4. At the same time the normal functioning of fundamental things, such as the provision of electricity, has to be restored. In some places the electrical cables are lying on the ground and underneath the rubble, and there is danger that people could be electrocuted.
5. The army is guarding the critical points, robbery and rioting began at the moment of the earthquake. That is why many people are not prepared to leave their homes or properties.
6. The lack of psychological and technical preparation of the population has resulted in chaos among the volunteers, the breakdown of communication possibilities with the worst affected areas and the rescue of the wounded and injured.

Necessities:

- Water in bottles or cans
- Medicines based on the practical instructions of the medical staff
- Materials, so that the people can re-build their houses again, to the extent that this is possible.

Strategy:

1. Collaboration with the teams of the Ministries for Social Services and construction of housing, to take over the criteria for expenditure.
2. Collaboration with the Bishop of the dioceses.
3. Co-ordinated work with the Calasanz Institutions:

Casa Hogar de Jesús
Initiative against child labour
Prish drop in clinic
Calasanz schools
Parish of San José de Calasanz

4. Purchase of necessary materials and delivery to the families after prior notification and regularity

5. Drawing up schemata – with copies of invoices that justify donations.