

C.8 Honduras - 1974 - Hurricane

Case study: Shelter construction

Case study credit:
UNDRO 1982

Project type:

Camps
Materials distribution
House construction

Disaster:

Hurricane "Fifi"

Disaster date:

18-20 September 1974

Number of houses damaged or destroyed:

27,000

Number of people displaced:

Upto 350,000

Value of damage:

Approximately
500 million USD.

Value of assistance:

11.6 million USD from
external sources



Project timeline

- 26 Sept – Meeting of agencies; Each was asked to indicate in which area of relief it wished to work
- 20 Sept – Arrival of first supplies for emergency shelter; requests changed due to continuing surveys
- 19 Sept – Damage assessment teams requested from UNDRO and US Government
- Honduras Red Cross dealt with immediate needs
- September 1974 – Hurricane Fifi

Emergency

Eight large refugee camps were established. The largest was built in Choloma to house 318 families (1,831 people). In addition there were improvised shelters. The extended family system does not appear to have functioned effectively. Existing buildings, such as schools, were used as temporary shelter.

Reconstruction

There were the major programmes of house building, each lead by a voluntary agency. In addition, CARE distributed roofing materials for 5,324 houses; housing was built above the flood plain, on the hillside, but remained vulnerable in many instances, due to poor 'cut and fill' techniques. A wide variety of systems including prefabricated timber and precast concrete systems were used for housing construction.

Strengths and weaknesses

- ✘ There was a marked absence of governmental provision of new housing.
- ✘ There was marked lack of local involvement in the camp and in rehousing programmes, many of which were culturally unsuited to local conditions
- ✘ The distribution of aid was concentrated in certain centres such as Choloma, which caused a spiral of dependency with adverse long-term consequences.
- ✘ Many of the housing systems were not easily modified or maintained by those living in them.
- ✘ New buildings were not designed or sited to resist future high winds or flood action adequately.
- One of the new housing settlements, 'Colonia Canada', in Choloma is interesting in that it evolved from a refugee camp of 485 families to a permanent settlement of 381 houses.