Guatemala: ADRA aids thousands after recent natural disasters hit

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The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Guatemala completed a two-week campaign in partnership with Guatevision, a national television station, to collect and distribute more than 86,500 pounds of relief supplies to the thousands of people affected by the recent earthquakes, tropical storms, and prolonged rains. The Central American country experienced overflowing rivers and destroyed bridges and homes resulting from these natural disasters last month.

So far, ADRA has distributed 1,700 food bags made up of rice, beans, cornmeal, oil, sugar, and other food items, as well as 500 25-pound bags of clothes, 510 gallons of water and 1,300 hygiene kits benefitting more than 8,000 people in the 24 affected communities in Chimaltenango, Escuintla and Santa Rosa, Oct. 21 to Nov. 6, 2011.

ADRA Guatemala initially invested $20,000 to purchase 33,000 pounds of food and sought Guatevision to further the impact of those affected, said Gustavo Menendez, ADRA Guatemala director.

"This crisis has opened the doors for other companies and institutions of high prestige to channel their donations through ADRA Guatemala to help thousands of affected persons." Menendez said.

"Our alliance with Guatevision has allowed us to reach thousands more homes to appeal for donated goods," said Menendez. "To see how the church's organization in service to humanity has been aided the needy regardless of race, crede or social status."

Young people from dozens of churches in Guatemala City worked 14-hour days for 14 days to assemble and distribute the food bags to disaster shelters and affected communities.

Pastor Guenther Garcia, president of the church in Guatemala, said the church has always been happy to use church member volunteers to partner with ADRA in aiding in the midst of disaster.

"Through the IAD and the Union, we are gathering some $100,000 in funds to help the most affected in Guatemala," said Garcia. Garcia reported that some 100 families were affected and two temples were damaged.

"Many of our members lost their homes and their farms but they have not lost the love of Jesus," said Garcia. The church is currently activating some projects to help the Adventist families as well, according to Garcia.

ADRA International, ADRA Inter-America and ADRA Guatemala initially donated $20,000 which went towards the purchase of the food items, said Menendez, who has been overseeing the packaging and distributing goods in dozens of shelters and communities and villages.

"We have been in communities like Caserio Las Animas in Santa Rosa, where people had to cross a rope over turbulent river waters to get their sack of food," said Menendez. "And some walked..."