



RESCUE GLOBAL

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & RESPONSE



OPERATION COMPRENSIÓN



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ABOUT RESCUE GLOBAL

Rescue Global is a UK charity, a US 501(c)(3) nonprofit and an International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO).

Our mission is: To Save Life.

We do this by empowering decision makers at the nation-state level working in the Disaster Risk Reduction and Response (DRR&R) environment. We also conduct liaison, mentoring, training and disaster reconnaissance missions during the critical response phase, deploying to disasters worldwide.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Aligned with our core mission, **To Save Life**, a great amount of our time and resources are focused on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) activities. By conducting DRR activities such as risk assessments, capability analysis, reviews, research, education and training, we work to build capacity and foster resilience worldwide.

DISASTER RESPONSE

Rescue Global empowers decision makers with expert training, mentoring and added capabilities in times of need, in order to save lives. We assist complex disaster response command and control operations in direct support of nations impacted by disasters, as well as provide a reconnaissance and assessment capability, in order to gather vital information which may otherwise be difficult or impossible to collect.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Through our work along the DRR&R life cycle, Rescue Global participates in and commissions projects which conduct research, develop and test methods, technologies and practices in the most realistic context possible.

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

On 23 October 2015, Hurricane Patricia, the strongest hurricane ever recorded at sea, made landfall on the southern Pacific coast of Mexico. Although the category 5 hurricane had recorded speeds of over 200 mph, it weakened rapidly after making landfall, degrading to a tropical depression that brought torrential rains and flooding. Despite initial fears of a devastating impact, the storm steered clear of densely populated areas with loss of life and property much less than originally forecast.

Pre-emptive actions by the Mexican authorities, including the evacuation of more than 10,000 people from the projected path of the hurricane, successfully mitigated the threat to local communities.

However, many communities within the Colima and Jalisco states of Mexico were not spared from the destructive forces of Patricia:

- Recorded fatalities: 8 direct; 5 indirect
- Estimated economic damages: \$283.2m

- Countries affected: Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras and the US (Texas)
- Impacts: widespread flooding and landslides; infrastructure and agricultural losses

Aligned with our core approach of working in partnership and empowering the affected nation, [Rescue Global](#) responded to Hurricane Patricia by launching Operation Comprensión (meaning “understanding” in Spanish).

Operation Comprensión began with remote mentoring and engagement of our [Crisis and Disaster Resilience Alliance \(CaDRA\)](#) partners in the region, but soon escalated to the deployment of a [Liaison, Mentoring and Training \(LMT\) Officer](#) to support CaDRA partners on the ground in their response and recovery activities.

Beyond providing support to our partners, Operation Comprensión was the catalyst for follow-on missions that re-established basic services and repaired and replaced damaged structures in areas affected by Hurricane Patricia, directly helping those most vulnerable.



LAUNCH OF OPERATION COMPRESIÓN

Rescue Global's initial response to Hurricane Patricia was to liaise with our CaDRA partners in Mexico – [CADENA \(Comité de Ayuda a Desastres y Emergencias Nacionales\)](#) – who work directly with the Mexican government on Disaster Risk Reduction and Response (DRR&R). Rescue Global and CADENA have been working in partnership worldwide since 2013, when we collectively ensured the provision of safe and sustainable drinking water to over 50,000 people affected by Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) in the Philippines, as a part of [Operation Phoenix](#).

Our initial operational response was conducted as Deployment Type 1 (DT1) and provided remote support to CADENA, accomplishing the following objectives:

- Develop our working relationship with CADENA and the Mexican government in order to deliver life-saving capability in Mexico and Central and South America in response to Hurricane Patricia
- Work with CADENA in a remote mentoring capacity, offering the skills and support of the CaDRA alliance

- Support and mentor CADENA in strategic planning and risk management practices, as well as the tactical deployment of damage assessment tools and activities in the response.

In the days immediately following Hurricane Patricia, Rescue Global mentored the [CADENA Go Team](#) (CADENA's quick response team) and Headquarters (HQ) staff in order to plan, prepare and deploy in alignment with Rescue Global protocols. This further enabled them to rapidly conduct standardised assessments, relay information on observed damages and ultimately, inform the response efforts to better serve those affected.

Simultaneously, Rescue Global engaged other CaDRA partners to standby for assistance, if further actions proved necessary. For example, the Artificial Intelligence (AI) department at Oxford University – our partners in [The Orchid Project](#) – were readied to implement technologies previously trialled by Rescue Global following the earthquakes in Nepal, May 2015. Likewise, [Micromappers](#) and [Zooniverse](#) digital communities were prepared to map affected areas, in the path of the

hurricane, identifying points for high-impact response.

Coordinating and assisting with medical preparations, Dr Heidi Sampang with [Remote Area Medical \(RAM\)](#) provided templates and guidelines for community health assessments, allowing the Go Team to quickly and effectively gather detailed information on casualties and urgent medical needs.

CADENA also conducted damage assessments of affected areas via fixed-wing and unmanned aerial surveys and ground-based collections in order to identify community needs. Through such assessments they discovered that damage was concentrated in a narrow corridor, and that certain areas within this affected area had suffered heavy infrastructure damage. Furthermore, the Go Team identified communities with urgent post-disaster needs, including the need for food, clean water, and essential medication and sanitation items, as well as longer-term requirements ranging from psychological support, to deal with traumatic stress, to practical support for rebuilding structures, roads and other infrastructure.



GETTING OUT THE DOOR – RESCUE GLOBAL DEPLOYMENT TYPES

Rescue Global has five separate Disaster Risk Reduction and Response (DRR&R) deployment type levels, scaled to best support the needs of the affected nation and the requirements of the response. Deployment Types range from remote mentoring as mentioned above (DT1), through to a full deployment of Pathfinder and LMT Teams (DT2 – DT5) and a robust HQ element, with the enhancing option to engage our CaDRA partners at each level. Our decision to deploy in one type versus another is based on the severity of the situation, the capacity and capability of the host nation and local actors to respond, and the specific needs generated by the event. Here is a detailed look at how Rescue Global task organises and deploys worldwide to best support those in need:

DT1 – Remote Monitoring

DT1 is the initiation of remote monitoring and mentoring of host Nation Disaster Management Agencies (NDMA) or organisations. Rescue Global conducts DT1s from our global HQ in London and from region offices. Activities under a DT1 typically include assistance with information gathering, media relations, and/or coordination with related academic institutions.

DT2 – LMT Deployed

DT2 is the deployment of a Liaison, Mentoring and Training (LMT) element to embed with and assist a host nation NDMA. LMT Officers directly assist with information flows and operational environments, increasing response effectiveness on the ground.

DT3 – Pathfinders Deployed

DT3 includes the deployment of Pathfinder Teams (PF) to augment host nation organisations, CaDRA partners or other NGOs in a response. PFs usually deploy with other support elements, such as a forward HQ, and provide direct support to the response effort at the tactical level.

DT4 – LMTs & PFs Deployed

DT4 aims to support the host government at the tactical and strategic levels, sending both LMT and PF elements to assist in the disaster response. The synergy and combined effect of LMTs and PFs produce a greater response capability on the ground.

DT5 – Full Deployment of RG

DT5 is a full-scale deployment of Rescue Global – all RG assets are put in play in the response. A DT5, both in scale and commitment, represents Rescue Global's effort to shape the scope of the disaster by applying all available resources. While all deployment types require host nation support, a DT5 requires intimate cooperation with the NDMA and other responding organisations, and focuses on interoperability of military, political, civilian and commercial entities. Just as other deployment types aim to create resiliency within organisations, a DT5 aims to build true resiliency at the local, regional and national levels, ensuring that local actors will be better prepared and better positioned to respond to future disasters.

ESCALATION OF THE RESPONSE

Based on CADENA's initial damage assessments, Rescue Global made the decision to advance the operation to Deployment Type 2 (DT2) by sending an LMT Officer to assist with the analysis and integration of collected information into CADENA's relief mission.

This generated further objectives to amplify the impact of Operation Comprensión and build capacity for future operations:

- Provide LMT support for the planning, command and control, and implementation of CADENA's aid delivery
- Conduct follow-on field assessments alongside the CADENA Go Team to inform Mexican authorities and other actors responding to Hurricane Patricia
- Investigate the potential to deploy ground aspects of AI technology.

Colby Howard, who works in both a Pathfinder and LMT capacity at Rescue Global, deployed to Mexico on 27 October 2015. His deployment was supported by our partners at [Airlink](#) who work with major airlines to provide flights for humanitarian workers responding to crises around the globe. This kind of support from our partners is vital for cost-efficient operational capabilities and allows Rescue Global to deploy more often and for greater effect around the world.

Within 24 hours of notice, Colby was on the ground in Mexico and pushing to the site of the disaster with the CADENA relief team. While the relief mission itself was the remit of the CADENA team, Colby's aim was to help

CADENA leadership work with other organisations on the ground to bring more efficient and effective aid to those affected by the storm. This required evaluation of internal procedures and implementation of remedy plans to standardise planning, briefing and debriefing of each relief mission, with each evolution building a mentality of risk mitigation and management.

Initial relief efforts by CADENA and Rescue Global were highly successful, however the operational plan altered when, following the hurricane, heavy rainfall caused flash flooding across Jalisco and Calima states on the Pacific coast of Mexico. Inhabitants who had been impacted by Hurricane Patricia suffered further from the effects of flooding.

Therefore, CADENA and Rescue Global conducted follow-up assessments in areas previously visited, in order to (re)evaluate changes and needs brought about by the floods. Additional assessments identified villages that had received no help or support.

Operating beyond the original remit of the operation, the CADENA field team, augmented by our LMT, stayed on to assist in the flood response. These efforts have continued into the recovery phase and those affected by Hurricane Patricia continue to receive assistance, to build back better, more resilient communities.

CADENA (the Committee for Relief of Disasters and National Emergencies) is a private, non-profit association from the Jewish Community of Mexico, dedicated to emergency assistance and prevention of natural disasters. We deliver relief aid "Hand to Hand", directly to people in need. CADENA's mission is to reduce the vulnerability of people living at risk of a natural disaster or emergency by way of creating a culture of prevention and inclusion.



REFLECTIONS ON OPERATION COMPRESIÓN

MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Operation Comprensión was undoubtedly successful in achieving our objectives to build and strengthen relationships within the CaDRA network, while supporting delivery of relief to those affected by Hurricane Patricia.

Although Operation Comprensión has now been formally completed, it is still aiding the recovery of the impacted areas. Post-disaster reconnaissance and assessments conducted during the mission continue to fuel the recovery effort. Working from assessments detailing the needs of these affected villages, CADENA has launched a series of missions in the towns and villages of Chamela, Los Ranchito and Nacastillo, to re-establish basic services and provide construction materials and labour to repair and replace damaged structures.

Additionally, the development of CADENA's planning and risk management tools is an outcome that will continue to benefit the communities that they work with. Rescue Global will maintain this partnership with CADENA to develop and improve their response mechanisms, and stands ready to assist them in future deployments.

Operation Comprensión has helped advance the growth and development of Rescue Global relationships with nations in the Americas who are regularly affected

by natural disasters. Central and South America are vulnerable to several types of natural hazards, and therefore long-term disaster risk reduction projects, as well as response, are critical to building true resilience in the region.

Rescue Global is proud to have assisted the Mexican government and the CADENA team in Operation Comprensión, accomplishing much for those affected:

- Delivered urgent aid to hundreds of families across six communities in Jalisco state, Mexico
- Identified three previously 'undiscovered' communities who had yet to receive any assistance or needs assessment. This identification meant that urgent aid and supplies could be mobilised
- Conducted ground surveys and assessments, generating additional relief and recovery missions, to include roofing and reconstruction missions by CADENA
- Established relationships in the region and country that will enable future cooperation in Disaster Risk Reduction and Response.

If you would like to learn more about the Disaster Risk Reduction and Response capabilities of Rescue Global, or to find out how you can assist us through making a donation, partnering or volunteering, please visit:

www.rescueglobal.org

