

## **Narrative Report „Bringing Hope to Isla Chira after the tropical storm Nate“**

We present the following narrative report, which is part of the implementation of the programme „Appeal CRC171“, tropical storm Nate in Costa Rica, which furthermore includes the following actions in communication and information:

Number	Action	Publication	
1.	Illustrative video of the visit	Web site ILCO and Youtube	fulfilled
2.	Interviews (spanish and english text)  a) Mrs. Liliana Martínez b) Mr. Tomás Pérez	Web site ILCO and Youtube	fulfilled
3.	Photograph album	Web site ILCO	fulfilled
4.	Article (spanish)	Web site ILCO	fulfilled
5.	Distribution	Sending to mailing list (spanish)	fulfilled
6.	Facebook	Post	fulfilled
7.	Article (english)	Web site ILCO	fulfilled
8.	Distribution	Sending to mailing lists (german, english and swedish)	fulfilled
9.	Narrative Report (spanish)	ACT Alliance	fulfilled
10.	Narrative Report (english)	ACT Alliance	fulfilled
11.	Radio programme	Work of ACT Alliance in Costa Rica	to be elaborated

### **Participants Costa Rican Lutheran Church**

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### **Conservative Community Association of Alternative Rural Tourism (ACTUAR)**



The present report is a source not only to describe the actions of humanitarian aid carried out to Isla Chira the 21 of december 2017, but also to rescue a vision

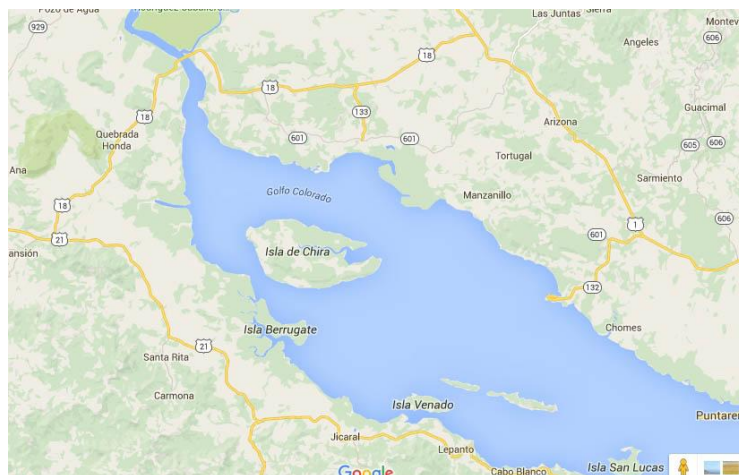
of hope and fight on the part of a population that in spite of being affected by the tropical storm Nate, reflects a big wish to learn and to be able to confront new threats in the future.

The Costa Rican Lutheran Church (ILCO) with the collaboration of ACTUAR as a local partner carried out food and hygiene kits to 75 families that were affected by the tropical storm Nate in Isla Chira.

In Isla Chira live approximately 3000 people and their main economic activity is the fishing and the harvest of mollusks which provides an economic activity of survival to the population.

Furthermore, the tourism has developed to a growing activity thanks to the natural and geographic resources. However, it is not enough to get out of a socioeconomic condition of poverty.

The tropical storm Nate was rated as one of the biggest natural disasters of the last decades due to the damages it caused in agriculture, infrastructure and the housing situation in at least three quarters of the country.



The provinces of Guanacaste and Puntarenas, were most of the affected regions, both located in the Pacific coast, where also Isla Chira takes place. The tropical storm Nate affected thousands of people, caused the death of at least eleven people and approximately 1200 needed to be transferred to hostels. Isla Chira is located in the upper part of the Nicoya Gulf and contains a great diversity of the dry tropical forest. The island consists of six communities located in the western part, because the east part consists of mangrove swamp.

During the tropical storm Nate, Isla Chira was completely isolated and affected by some strong winds and some floodings that all affected the economy of the island. The affectation by the storm was probably even worse, as it occurred in October, that is a month that is characterized by strong rain falls and unstable atmospheric conditions that left the country in the status of red alert.

In spite of the fact that the Costa-Rican government decreed emergency status in order to facilitate the canalization of resources for the attention of the damages and the affected people, there was also given priority to the urban communities, leaving the remote and rural zones without attention as it was the case in Isla Chira. For this reason any type of help that came of humanitarian aid organizations, in this case the alimentation, was a factor of great joy and help in order to confront the impacts of those natural disasters.

The families of the island waited with a lot of longing for any kind of help, which not only would provide them alimentation but also the knowledge that there exist organisations such as ACTUAR and the ILCO that could offer them a helping hand in difficult times, a humanitarian support that minimizes their longings.

According to Mrs. Liliana Martínez, communal leader of Isla Chira, the gulf islands are patrimony of the state which is a limiting factor for development because the government does not want to invest in the island and does not give neither legalisation nor permission for development. As we can see the situation is difficult and that can be seen in two aspects: 1) the natural impact 2) the missing support by the government.

The tropical storm Nate obviously left some problems that had not been considered and some of them are not directly connected to the emergency as for example: infrastructure or the training of organisation for a local management of risks.

The families of Isla Chira were mainly affected by the impact of the sea, which directly affected the fishing activity, the main source of economic income for the families. If there is for example a strong wind or the water changes it's temperature, you can not fish. Moreover, the floodings coming from the north result that the water turns sweet or dirty by the influence of the Tempisque river, which brings a huge quantity of sediments.

In spite of the community of Isla Chira seems to have a policy that treats the environment responsibly, protecting the fishing areas especially where the fishes spawn or protecting well and restaurating the mangrove swamp, it is not enough to confront the natural impacts such as the storms.

The habitants of Isla Chira do neither expect more economic resources than the already obtained by fishing nor do they expect tools to contribute in a better way in the protection of the environment. The communal leader Mrs. Liliana Martínez tells us:

***„Our contribution consists only of the conservation of resources, as for example not to pollute the sea, giving a treatment to the waste and avoid contamination, but we do not have a preparation or training that helps us to confront in the best possible way the natural impacts.“***



In spite of the knowledge of the coming storm Nate, the population did not receive a relevant information from the government. Therefore, they did not have a clear idea about its magnitude and for being an island surrounded by water nobody was interested in informing them. We see clearly the lack of information, which can be a very important tool in the management of risks, because the provided information can save lives in the situation of natural disasters. The information can not prevent the disaster from happening, but with an adequate management in the right moment you can contribute in the reduction of risk and the decrease of the effects.

Isla Chira was terribly affected by the floodings, but the worst was the impossibility of fishing and the missing other alternatives to survive. Because of the lack of electricity a lot of food turned bad and there was no alimentation or water for the families. They were isolated for many days.

In spite of the fact that the storm affected terribly the island. It left a very important lesson. He pointed out the need of organisation and the implementation of a risk management that permits to fit out a better infrastructure as for example the paths in the higher part of the island and to fit out more secure places and the identification of houses with better construction. The population did not have knowledge of the natural risks before the storm, thinking that there would never happen an impact with that magnitude.

Mrs. Liliana Martínez told us that it is important to receive an information, no matter if it comes from the emergency commission or other organisations that are related to natural disaster. Furthermore, it is important to receive knowledge and training. In addition, it is very important to create a local committee for the management of risks.

Related to the help with alimentation Liliana expressed that:

***„It was a huge relief because there were still many families with needs and this help comes to bring joy. Chira is one entire family. This help for us comes in the right moment because we are left alone by the government and the situation is very difficult for our families. This food and hygiene kits helped us to hold up our homes for at least one month.“***

The island was structurally affected in the supply of electricity because the cables went past the sea's surface and the mangrove swamps and there were many lightnings that destroyed the electric cables and the pipe for the water supply. Moreover, the houses were not constructed to confront floodings and the strong wind. For this reason many houses were affected.

The storm Nate affected the coral reefs, because it caused an abnormal running of mud that covered the coral, which caused that many species died such as mollusks and shrimps and the fishing still has not recovered. The problem of the island is huge because the Costa Rican government does not give the permission to fish and confiscates the products and the tools of the fisherman that do not have permission. There are 25% of the population that have the permission to

fish. Only to those, who have the permission is assigned a subvention by the government.

Mr. Tomás Pérez tells us that:

***„The problem is that they do not want to extend the permissions. The idea was that the government activates the old or expired permissions because there are many elderly people that already retired, but they cancel those permissions.”***



This year after the closed season immediately came the storm, two events that deepened the crisis on the island. The problem of the island is that the people live isolated and there are no other alternatives of working. The only opportunity for an income is the fishing.

In spite of being very affected by the storm Tomás Pérez expresses a very important vision concerning the fishermen's situation.

***„In this situation we can reached good results with a little bit of intelligence and training, it does not help having a good fishing equipment, if there are not fishes or you can not fish because of the lack of permission. It would be great to operate a project, how to cultivate and how to handle a better balance to not only take out of the sea but also to execute a work of sustainable production of shrimps, mollusks and red snappers.”***

As a conclusion we can say that the pain, death and damages that left the tropical storm Nate (2017), makes obvious that exist vacuums in the matter of risk management and the training of local emergency committees. Moreover, the analysis that elaborated by the experts, permits to say that Costa Rica in spite of having a national policy of risk management, a policy that pretends to generate changes in geographical and social factors, that causes the risk and reduce the losses generated by disasters and to improve the well-being of the people, Costa Rica did neither achieve to fulfill the adopted commitments in the topic of human development, nor move forward to a preventive process to achieve a reduction of the losses provided by disasters.

An example is the situation that experienced the habitants of Isla Chira who did not receive the appropriate help by the government. That indicates that Costa Rica in spite of its international agreements and internal policies, is no sustainable country concerning the management of risks. Therefore, it is very important the solidarian and humanitarian support of civil organisations, churches, and others that not only provide a series of help such as alimentation and reconstruction but that also develop a dialogue and dynamic and comprehensive process coming from the different social fields and act directly about the prevention in order to decrease the risk.

In short we conclude that it is urgent to reduce the vulnerabilities that can be seen in the communities via dialogues and integral actions such as the creation of local committees, the implementation of preventive actions, the construction of a plan in order to reduce vulnerabilities and the attention of emergencies. These steps should be used as urgent tools in these communities, in order to maximize the individual, collective and institutional training in order to achieve a culture of prevention and active participation of the whole population. Moreover, comprehensive actions would encourage new productive activities that could also minimize the level of poverty and exclusion that suffer these communities as it is the case of Isla Chira.