



INADEQUATE AND INSUFFICIENT RESPONSE OF THE THREE GOVERNMENT LEVELS WHEN FACED WITH THE DISASTER CAUSED IN OAXACA BY THE EARTHQUAKE: NGOs

- The urgent basic needs of people affected by the earthquake have not been met.
- NGOs report the opportunism of political parties and pre-candidates.
- The presence of companies in the area does not replace the government's obligation to serve the affected people.

Mexico City, September 18th, 2017.- After the earthquake of September 7th, seven civil society expert organizations formed a **Humanitarian Observation Mission (HOM)** that toured the area of the isthmus of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca, witnessing the lack of government coordination in the distribution of humanitarian aid and the discretionary use of the scarce resources that have arrived in the area.

The HOM carried out evaluation tasks from September 11th to 14th in the communities of Ixhuatán, Juchitán de Zaragoza, Matías Romero, Pachiñe River, San Dionisio del Mar, Pueblo Nuevo (Municipal Body of San Francisco del Mar), San Mateo del Mar, Santa María Xadani and Unión Hidalgo, affected by the 8.2 magnitude earthquake. The objective was to ensure that humanitarian action is implemented under the principles of impartiality, neutrality, humanity and operational independence that dictate the highest standards of international humanitarian law.

The most relevant findings of the Observation Mission include:

- There is a lack of inter-institutional coordination in all disaster areas and there is no prompt action. In contrast, there is a large military and federal police presence in the different communities visited.
- The humanitarian aid that has arrived is inadequate and insufficient. The urgent basic needs of people affected by the earthquake, such as the right to water, food and health, among others, have not been met. Moreover, civil society efforts to collect and deliver food have faced harassment and, in some cases, the collection has been confiscated.
- Federal and state governments have involved different government agencies (such as the Secretariat of Energy, the Secretariat of Tourism and the National Forestry Commission) that do not have the capacity or experience in this type of disaster to evaluate damaged properties.
- Pre-candidates and public servants have fallen into opportunistic practices by conditioning humanitarian aid delivering it only to people close to the government and political parties, some even re-channeling the supplies that arrive in the area.



- Some private companies are playing a leading role in the response, **something that should not replace government obligations**. Several of these companies have had problems in some of these communities because of megaprojects being developed, and we do not know if they have the skills and knowledge to perform the response tasks under the highest standards of international humanitarian law.

Participating organizations call on the federal government to address the following **recommendations**:

1. All government levels have an obligation to protect and guarantee the human rights of all people and place them at the center of attention and response efforts, making the right to water and a safe roof for people affected by the earthquake a priority.
2. The delivery of humanitarian aid must recognize the different needs of the population without any discrimination, including women, girls, children, the elderly and indigenous people.
3. The federal government should initiate reconstruction work urgently, with a disaster prevention approach.
4. Providing people with a decent shelter should be a priority, otherwise, this could cause the situation to get even worse since the hurricane season does not end until November.
5. Reconstruction efforts should include the recovery of livelihoods and the local economy, since the affected people not only lost their homes but also their material assets, their businesses and their sources of employment.

This crisis is added to the preexisting conditions of exclusion, inequality and poverty in which there were many people and communities of the visited region. Therefore, the HOM emphasizes that when facing the serious disaster caused by the earthquake, **affected people are holders of rights, NOT objects of aid, and therefore their voice must be heard first during this stage of response, and in the future stage of reconstruction and recovery.**

The organizations that make up the Observation Mission for Humanitarian Aid are: The Tepeyac Human Rights Center of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec; the Gobixha Comprehensive Human Rights Defense Committee (DH Code); Oxfam México; the Organization, Development, Education and Research Project (PODER); the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Project (ProDESC); Services for an Alternative Education (Educa); and Tequio Jurídico.

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