

Banos Landslide Updates

June 17. Notification of the tragedy

Dear EcoMinga friends,

I hope this message finds you well. We urgently need to inform you about a critical situation affecting the Baños to Puyo region, particularly between Quilloturo-El Placer, and the reserves of the Llanganates-Sangay Corridor. Recent intense rains have created a severe emergency.

In the past few days, relentless rainfall has caused landslides, flooding, and extensive damage to local infrastructure, as well as to the biodiversity we work tirelessly to protect. Numerous areas within the reserves have experienced landslides, blocking roads and destroying bridges. Heavy rains have caused rivers and streams to overflow, inundating large portions of the reserves. Trails and facilities have been significantly affected. Tragically, there have been several fatalities and injuries. Many communities are now isolated without access to food, have lost all their belongings, and are in urgent need of assistance.

To mitigate the damage and protect both the reserves and the affected communities, we urgently need your support in the following areas: Emergency Response Funds to finance rescue operations, repair infrastructure, and stabilize land. Basic Supplies: essential items to support immediate needs. Technical Assistance: experts in natural disaster management and conservation to assess the damage and develop a long-term recovery plan. Humanitarian Aid: food, potable water, medicines, and shelter for the communities that have lost everything.

Economical support: Any financial contribution will be invaluable to our immediate response and recovery efforts. Supply Donations: equipment and materials can be sent to our facilities in Baños. Message Dissemination: help us spread this emergency call to other potential donors and organizations that can offer assistance.

We deeply appreciate your continued support and hope to count on your help during these challenging times. Together, we can make a significant difference and assist the affected communities.

With our best regards,

EcoMinga Team

June 18, 2024

Dear friends,

This is the up to dated status of the tragedy:

Motorized roads are still inaccessible, and restricted access due to military cordons remains in place; we are currently working on obtaining a pass to enter zone 0. Partial aid is being provided in Rio Verde, but communication is still lacking. The shelters in San Vicente are housing 90 people, while Rio Verde has 300 people, though their status remains unclear. Military assistance continues, with aid being delivered by armed forces via helicopter.

EcoMinga's and allies efforts:

- o Shelter: Fundación Oscar Efrén Reyes (FOER) (EcoMinga's office): 25 adults, 9 children.
- o We are assisting the municipality with fuel for machinery (public and private).
- o Our ranger, Mr. Recalde, is organizing support for inaccessible areas.
- o We are attempting to reach affected areas via Vizcaya donations and in coordination with WWF.

And thank you wholeheartedly for your invaluable assistance.

We will keep in touch,

EcoMinga Team

Dear friends,

I am excited to share some important news with you.

We are pleased to announce that we now have a donation channel in the United States, thanks to the generous support of the Orchid Conservation Alliance (OCA). They have kindly set up a dedicated donation line for us, named the **Ecominga Banos Landslide Fund**.

For it, go to: <https://orchidconservationalliance.org/donate/>

Then you will find DONATION and choose "My Donation is for": Ecominga Banos Landslide Fund.

Thank you again for your continued support and generosity. Together, we can make a significant impact.

With kind regards,

Tati

June 22, 2024

Dear friends,

This has been an exhausting week, especially for our field team and everyone in the offices in Quito, Tulcán, and Mera. We have mobilized support from all our reserves. Imagine what it has been like for the people of El Placer, and especially Quilloturo, who have lost everything.

The rains have continued, causing new landslides. Five hundred families are affected, the death toll has risen to 18, and we still don't have an accurate count of the missing. There are 47 heavy machines working tirelessly, and we've had to finance the fuel for them.

Despite the challenges, this week has also been filled with immense love and gratitude for every person and organization that has come forward to help us in this critical time. Your support has been a light of hope amidst the devastation, reminding us that even in the darkest times, compassion and solidarity prevail.

Lou had posted this:

<https://ecomingafoundation.wordpress.com/2024/06/19/disaster-strikes-our-banos-area-rangers-and-their-families/>

Thank you for standing with us and the affected communities.
This is just the beginning.

Un abrazo para todos,
EcoMinga Team

June 27;

Dear Roberta

Thank you very much for your email and for your efforts. We sincerely appreciate it; you don't know what this means for the affected people. So far, up to date, we have 1126 people from 256 affected families.

Un abrazo grande,
Tati

El jue, 27 jun 2024 a las 11:20, Roberta Fox (<robertaorchidcentral@gmail.com>) escribió:

Dear **Tatiana** -

We have received a great response from many people! Please accept this donation of \$10,000 toward the landslide relief efforts.

The funds transfer is complete, the money should be in your bank soon.

Kind regards,

Roberta Fox
Treasurer, Orchid Conservation Alliance

June 28

Dear friends of EcoMinga,

It has been 12 days since the disaster occurred in Cantón Baños. As I mentioned previously, the Quilloturo community has been completely wiped out, and the El Placer community has been significantly affected. Between Baños and El Placer, there are 14 km, with 6 km impacted by landslides between Agoyán and Río Verde. The foundations of the Las Mercedes bridge were damaged, isolating the route to the east from Baños.

After conducting a census, we identified 176 affected families. Our office in Baños (FOER) has been converted into a shelter, currently housing 25 people. Additionally, there are more people in another shelter in Baños (San Vicente), as well as in shelters in Río Verde and Moravia (Mera). People also had moved to friend or relative's houses near-by.

Our leaders have gone to the field to meet with public officials, and the authorities have decided to completely relocate the two towns, El Placer and Quilloturo. The authorities are also waiting for studies to support and complement the work done by the National Government's Risk Secretariat, which recommends declaring a large red polygon from Las Mercedes to part of Río Verde. It is necessary to say that we have provided satellite images from our friends at Planet.com, accessed through Voyager Space and The Explorers Club, for the geological and risk analyses.

Our immediate response included providing food, water, clothing, and basic hygiene supplies. We also paid approximately USD 5500 for fuel for 47 heavy public and private heavy machines. An economic bonus was provided to families who lost loved ones or had members injured and hospitalized. The final count of fatalities was 14 locals, from both Quilloturo and El Placer. We are arranging brigades to provide psychological support for the affected people.

Our team continues to assess short- and medium-term actions, but we are maintaining the delivery of food, hygiene supplies, and medicines from donations made by people from Quito and surrounding areas. We have received great support from individuals and private companies, who have provided supplies and made financial donations approximately of USD 8000.

Thanks to international donations, we are considering installing early warning systems, weather stations, and improving infrastructure for accessing our reserves. We also aim to create job opportunities for those who lost everything. Additionally, we plan to conduct infrastructure studies (engineering) on the new relocation site.

We will also share a detailed financial report, including all income and expenditures, when necessary, depending on how the emergency evolves, the needs of the displaced people, and the decisions of the government and decentralized autonomous entities.

If you have more ideas on how to respond to these disasters or have faced similar situations in other countries, we would greatly appreciate your sharing your experience with us. Once again, thank you so much; you have been a balm of hope in these difficult days.

With our best regards,

Ecominga Team.

pd. Photos by Andrés León and EcoMinga people.

July 6

Dear friends,

Hereby, the weekly report on the Baños Disaster:

During this week, the rains have decreased substantially; however, there is still occasional drizzle. Some mud has continued to flow through certain ravines, but it has been cleared by the machinery still working in the sector. People are still in shelters or with family or friends.

Government/ Municipality actions:

- The Municipality of Baños has proposed two locations as urban planning options for the people of Quilloturo and El Placer - these options aim to provide suitable urban environments for the displaced families:

1. Las Pampas in Baños
2. La Martinez in Rio Negro

There is a possible relocation option in Mera, but it is complex due to legal conditions and the public funding processes for relocation, as it is in another province. The national government has promised to invest USD 5 million, which will be allocated to Río Negro and Baños; the problem is that the community is more comfortable with the space in Mera.

They are very afraid of staying in geographical conditions similar to Baños.

- The passage at bridge Las Mercedes is now open, temporarily, with a Bailey bridge.

Actions taken this week by EcoMinga:

- Provision of food, water, and medical supplies: Distribution of food kits, drinking water, supply basic hygiene items to shelters.

-Press notability: We issued a press note in a high-reach media outlet, Plan V. You can read the article at the following link:

<https://www.planv.com.ec/historias/plan-verde/deslave-la-zona-banos-el-cambio-climatico-pasa-la-factura>

- Psychological support: A first brigade of psychologists was dispatched to the area, and their preliminary diagnosis is as follows:

- The affected individuals are experiencing the typical stages of grief following the tragedy.
 - A sustained intervention process is necessary.
 - It is recommended to carry out an emergency intervention in the coming weeks to cover most of the shelters and then proceed with a more sustained prevention process for the coming months.
- Risk expert consult: We met with an expert in risks who has been working on other disasters in Ecuador. She has provided several insights into the steps we should follow moving forward. We discussed the implementation of mountain monitoring using technological alarm systems.
- Additionally, we are exploring options for involving more people in the rehabilitation of the Candelaria trails and considering opportunities for biodiversity monitoring work.

Despite the numerous challenges, significant progress has been made in providing immediate relief and beginning the reconstruction process. The continued support and collaboration from all stakeholders are crucial for overcoming this crisis and helping the affected communities rebuild their lives.

We thank everyone for their unwavering support during these challenging times. Together, we can make a difference and provide the necessary aid to those in need.

Best regards,

EcoMinga Team

July 12

Dear friends

This week, we undertook several crucial actions aimed at supporting the affected people. Our main team visited Rio Verde (with the affected families agreed to meet), marking a significant milestone as we successfully gathered the entire community for the largest meeting held there to date. This event served as an essential platform to address and discuss several critical issues impacting the community.

During the meeting, we covered a range of important topics:

- Mayor's office initiatives: We provided updates and discussed upcoming initiatives from the mayor's office, focusing on their impact on the community.
- Geological study: The latest findings from the geological study were shared, outlining potential risks and mitigation strategies.
- School supplies and uniforms: We addressed the distribution of school supplies and uniforms, ensuring that all children are adequately equipped for their education on the coming scholar year.
- Community bond: We discussed the community bond, explaining its benefits and how it will be utilized to support local projects.

We also highlighted some significant challenges:

- Rio Negro lot ex-propriation: It was a somber moment as we acknowledged that the Rio Negro lot is currently not viable for expropriation. This setback has been disheartening, but it has only strengthened our resolve to explore alternative solutions.
- Support for Mera: In light of the difficulties with Rio Negro, we are actively collaborating to maintain the possibility of securing land in Mera. Our efforts are focused on ensuring that this option remains viable for the community.

In addition to addressing challenges, we are making progress in several areas:

- Emergency housing: We have started the planning phase for constructing four emergency houses. This initiative is crucial for providing immediate shelter to those in urgent need.
- Professional reports: The psychologists have submitted their report, providing valuable insights into the community's mental health needs. On the same hand, people were very happy and relieved with their visit. Similarly, the geologists have provided detailed estimates of potential costs and timelines for necessary geological interventions.
- Ongoing donations: We continue to receive generous donations, primarily from universities and the National Food Bank. These contributions are vital in sustaining our community support programs.
- Rangers reactivation: The park rangers are re-activating their efforts, which is essential for maintaining the environmental health and safety of the community.
- Hospital assistance: We have provided significant assistance to hospitalized individuals, tailoring our support to the severity of each case. This targeted help has been critical in alleviating the burden on affected families.

In conclusion, our visit to the disaster zone has reinforced the strength and resilience of the community. Despite the challenges we face, the collective efforts and ongoing support from various sources give us and them hope and motivation to continue working towards a better future for affected people.

Un abrazo para todos

EcoMinga Team

pd. Hereby some photographs of the meetings, of the storage of supplies in the shelters, of the places visited.

July 23

Dear EcoMinga friends,

I hope this email finds you well and that those who can are enjoying their vacations.

Regarding the SOS CELS topic, I would like to inform you that I will be sending reports less frequently from now on, as we are entering medium and long-term processes.

Advances in psychosocial work

We are making progress in the psychosocial work with all affected individuals. This past weekend, a group of 10 psychologists visited two shelters, attending to approximately 60 people, including those with disabilities whom we visited in their retirement homes. This process will be ongoing for approximately 5 more months.

Risk management and supplies

We have already contracted the services of risk specialists to guide us on how to proceed. This consultancy will last for three months. As part of this, we will conduct a geological and risk study to evaluate the causes of the event that occurred in June and analyze the mudflows between the communities of La Merced and Quilloturo. Additionally, we continue to receive supplies from the people of Quito at our offices.

That is all I can share for the moment. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

With my best regards,

EcoMinga team

August 19

Dear friends,

It has been three months since the disaster struck Cantón Baños, and during this time, we have identified 176 affected families. As you know, our office in Baños (FOER) became a temporary refuge for 25 people, and we only recently closed it last week. We took care of all the fixed expenses, including electricity, water, internet, and food, to ensure that those in need had a safe place to stay. The shelters in San Vicente, Baños, as well as those in Río Verde and Moravia (Mera), remain open. However, some have returned to El Placer to protect their belongings and homes, despite the high risks they face.

In the immediate response, we provided food, water, clothing, basic hygiene supplies, and fuel for heavy machinery to clear the area. We also extended financial support to the families who lost loved ones or had injured and hospitalized members—14 lives were lost in Quilloturo and El Placer and four had been hospitalized. We organized teams to offer psychological support to those affected, and these sessions will continue until the end of September.

Our latest efforts include hiring geologists who specialize in natural disasters. Their work over the next three months will be critical in understanding the geological conditions of the area. This will involve:

- Creating a study plan, timeline, and coordination with local actors, including park rangers and community members, for data collection.
- Conducting a susceptibility assessment of mass movements on slopes and embankments from La Merced to Quilloturo and its surrounding areas.
- Developing thematic maps at a 1:5,000 scale, including slope maps, bedrock and surface deposit maps, mass movement susceptibility, geomorphological characterization of the watershed, and land use maps.
- Proposing a monitoring system for early warning of mass movements, which may include the installation of rain gauges and fixed points for monitoring slope movements, if feasible.

Additionally, we have distributed cash to acquire education kits, including school supplies and uniforms, as the school year begins in October. We have also delivered several guadua bamboo houses. These homes are built on land belonging to Abdón Recalde, the brother of several of our forest rangers. The process involved finding suitable land, clearing and conditioning it, and constructing columns—all carefully managed to ensure safety and stability.

Throughout this period, we have worked closely with the Municipality of Baños. Together, we have coordinated various actions on the ground to address the needs of the affected communities and support the ongoing recovery efforts.

We will provide a detailed financial report as needed, depending on how the situation evolves, the needs of the displaced, and the decisions made by the government and decentralized autonomous entities.

Despite the challenges, we have made significant progress in providing immediate relief and beginning the reconstruction process. The continuous support and collaboration of everyone involved are vital to overcoming this crisis and helping the affected communities rebuild their lives.

From the bottom of our hearts, we thank each and every one of you for your support during these trying times. Together, we can truly make a difference and provide the much-needed assistance to those who need it most.

With warm regards,

EcoMinga Team

pd. Hereby some photographs of the meetings, of the storage of delivery of money for students, clothes, geological studies, and house construction.

