

Remora builds houses for flood victims in Mexico

At the end of October 2007 the State of Tabasco in southeastern Mexico was hit by heavy rain and flooding – one of the worst natural disasters in Latin America’s history. More than 1.2 million people - or half the state’s population - were affected; many of them lost their homes. The disaster continues to have long term effects on the infrastructure and food situation in the area.



Remora decided to donate one million Mexican pesos (100 000 USD) to the flood victims, through the Latin American non-profit organization A Roof for My Country (Un Techo Para Mí País - UTPMP), managed by students and young people. Since the organization’s foundation, in Chile in 1997, more than 34 000 houses for the poorest of the poor have been built by young college volunteers across the Latin American continent.



UTPMP is planning to build 1 000 houses in the most affected areas of the Tabasco region where many of the inhabitants lost the little they had owned before the disaster. The housing project is therefore the biggest of its kind in the state. On January 25th the first phase of the housing project was launched in the state capital, Villahermosa. According to Governor Andrés Granier, “There is an enormous need in Tabasco for help and support in the extensive rebuilding phase that we are in the middle of, and Remora’s support is highly appreciated.”

In the week following the launch, 450 university students – mainly from Mexico’s private universities but also from other Latin American countries – built 150 houses in the region, together with the local receiver families. The houses are built of prefabricated modules made out of treated wood – a suitable material for the hot and humid climate in Tabasco. As a result of Remora’s donation, 48 families in the small community of Madero in the Tacotalpa district received a new home only five kilometers from where they used to live.

“For us, these houses represent a new hope for the future,” said Mr. Fermín Cruz Cruz, spokesperson for the families that moved into New Madero. For the previous three months these families had been living in temporary shelters after the extensive flooding made their homes unlivable.

Norway’s Ambassador to Mexico, Mr. Knut Solem, acknowledged Remora’s effort in Tabasco, “This kind of consideration for people in despair is a good example of corporate social responsibility. It is important that all Norwegian companies, even here in Mexico, are conscious of this responsibility, including it as an integrated part of their activities and strategy.”

Remora’s representative, Helen Kierulf Svane, was present during the construction. “I am deeply impressed with UTPMP’s work, their organizational skills and especially their capacity to summon so many students to dedicate their time to building houses for the disadvantaged.”

Remora’s hope is that other companies will be inspired to contribute when emergencies occur around the world. UTPMP, for instance, needs more funding to keep building houses in the Tabasco region this year in order to provide more people in need with a home. StatoilHydro Mexico recently decided to support UTPMP’s project in Tabasco.

Check out A Roof for My Country’s homepage for more information about the organization’s work in Mexico and Latin America: <http://www.untechoparamipais.org>



Photo captions.

1. New Madero is located in idyllic surroundings in the Tacotalpa district.
2. Remora’s caps were to be seen everywhere in Tabasco during the construction week. Remora’s representative, Helen Kierulf Svane (fourth from the left) together with volunteers from A Roof for My Country.
3. 450 volunteers worked hard to finish 150 houses in four different places in Tabasco in less than a week