

NEWS CLIP



Channel: **BBC News**

Date of Publication: November 10, 2005

The following comes to you courtesy of the Communications Office.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4426240.stm>



Guatemala faces hunger 'timebomb'



Hundreds of people were buried by landslides after a week of intense rains in early October.

But Trevor Rowe of the WFP says there are fears even more may die from malnutrition unless they get help soon.

"We suspect that by the end of the year most people's food will have run out," he says.

Many people have had homes and livelihoods wiped out

"We're talking about subsistence farmers, who live a hand-to-mouth existence."

Aid shortage

Many farmers had lost many or all of their crops, or even lost their land altogether, he told the BBC News website.

"There's concern they will be facing a severe hunger crisis" if international aid is not forthcoming, he added.

The WFP has launched an appeal for \$14.1m (£8m) to help feed 285,000 people over a six-month period.

Mr Rowe said only \$4.5m had been raised so far, from three countries: the US (\$3.5m), Norway and Switzerland.

"The severity of the hurricane hasn't been fully grasped yet," he said.

"Compared to Hurricane Mitch [in 1998], the impact on Guatemala is much worse."

Another Niger?

He said even before Stan arrived, Guatemala had chronic child malnutrition of 50%, with 80% in some areas.

"The bottom line is that these people will not be in a position to cope by the end of the year.

"Without the necessary food aid to help them these people are severely vulnerable.

"What we want is to avoid what happened in Niger," he said, referring to the famine in West Africa that was predicted by the WFP and others, but only got international attention and donations when pictures of starving victims appeared on TV in July, when it was too late for many.

The situation in Guatemala, he says, "is a timebomb waiting to go off... the fuse is lit".