



# Care for Kids La Paz



Care for Kids La Paz Newsletter

September, 2014

## IN THIS ISSUE

[From the President's Desk](#)

[Mission Statement](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

## QUICK LINKS

[Care for Kids La Paz Website](#)

[Email Address](#)

[Newsletter Archives](#)

[Donations](#)

[GoodSearch](#)

[GoodShop](#)

## From the President's Desk

Hurricane Odile, a Category 3 Hurricane, one of the strongest tropical cyclones to ever hit Mexico's Baja California peninsula, wreaked havoc as it made landfall on La Paz and Cabo San Lucas Sunday night, September 14, 2014. Torrential rain and intense 200 km/h wind snapped power lines, shredded tops of palm trees, broke windows and doors, blew off roofs from houses, damaged vehicles, flattened businesses and left hundreds in the poorer communities without a home.

Next morning, when dawn thankfully came, the winds had subsided somewhat. Curious as to what my neighbourhood looked like, I donned hiking boots, grabbed my camera and made my way through the obstacle course of fallen power lines, poles and trees, broken glass, crumpled metal sheets and signs which littered the streets. Nearly every block had multiple trees lying on the ground and overhead street signs and traffic lights were down or bent to pretzel size.

The worst, though, was yet to come. At the community of

Vista Hermosa, where once was a mountain filled with wood and tarpaper houses cascading down its side, was now empty of any structure. On the plains, anything not built of block, was flattened and levelled. The ground was littered with huge water containers, large pieces of wood, soaked mattresses, buckled metal roofs, and smashed toilets. It was difficult to take it all in.

Many of the families were caught unprepared. They either didn't hear about the hurricane - so they said - or they didn't pay much attention to the news - so they also said. Those whose homes were left standing or partially standing, didn't stock up on drinking water, food, propane or candles.

Fortunately, no lives were lost. Families who lived in unstable homes went to stay with friends or relatives or were evacuated to temporary shelters the government provided, where they remained for days. Some returned immediately to begin the rebuilding process with the help of neighbours.

The whole city of La Paz and surrounding areas were without running water, electricity, Internet, phone service, gasoline, propane, bottled water and bus service. These acute shortages of propane, water and food made the most fragile communities very vulnerable as those without cars depended heavily on the bottled water and propane delivery trucks that drove daily through the communities. However, for those companies that depended on either gasoline or electricity to get their businesses running, nothing was moving.

The electrical company (CFE) and water company (CONAGUA) are the real heroes in this tragic disaster. Hundreds and hundreds of CFE workers and trucks, transported by Navy vessels from the Mexican mainland, worked feverishly from dawn to sundown to restore power and water to La Paz and surrounding areas, critical services first. However, while the poorer communities were waiting for services to be repaired, they were in dire need of food and water.



Thanks to generous donors, our charity was able to deliver huge amounts of food and water to some of the poorer communities to help tide them over until all services were up and running. Some hadn't had drinking water in over two weeks. Everyone expressed gratitude for the food and water and we felt so blessed to be able to provide it.

An older gentleman asked me if we could help deliver water to his home. He had a heart condition and, considering his age, wouldn't be able to carry heavy 20-litre jugs of water up the steep, rocky road. His house, while made of wood and metal sheet, had the most impressive stonework enclosure that he built himself. His wife met us at their door and he introduced her to us as "my girl".



Another man used the water from his jug to 'shower' and then came back for a refill. Living in dust and debris without access to running water for weeks would surely make the delivery of purified water a defining moment in the life of

cleanliness.

It's beautiful moments like these [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), which seep through the saddest of situations.

As of September 30, one hundred percent of La Paz has electricity and piped-in water. You could almost hear the cheers in the city when we were finally on-line with Internet and phone service. There are no more queues at gas stations and drinking water is now available, a welcome thing, indeed. Schools opened after two weeks, city buses are once again on the move and supermarkets are well stocked.

It will take longer for those who have lost their homes and all their belongings to put the pieces back together. Mexican authorities report that at least 15,000 people in high-risk areas suffered damage or total loss of their homes due to heavy winds.

Alejandro, a resident in one community, told me that the government had given them panels of wood and nails on the condition that they form teams and work six hours a day helping each other with the construction. Unfortunately, the nails provided by the government were too short and the resident feared that, in another hurricane, the nails wouldn't hold the wood together. We immediately went to the hardware store where our charity was able to buy 30 kg of longer nails and 15 kg of flat washers that Alejandro calculated would be enough to rebuild six more houses.

The truth about natural disasters is that they either bring people together or they tear them apart. In La Paz, it has been the former. Resilient residents have come together sharing resources and spearheading massive clean-up and recovery efforts.



The Mexican people are extremely adaptable, have a strong faith and are full of hope. I talked to families who were grateful to be alive and, with no anger or bitterness in their hearts, repeatedly said, "We will rebuild."

A great deal more work remains to be done in the areas

that took the worst hits from the hurricane. As a community, we cannot let up until families who've been devastated by the storm are back on their feet.

As for me, not ever being in a hurricane before, it was a very long night. I thought I was prepared with drinking water, some canned food, flashlight batteries, candles, and a full gas tank but really nothing can prepare you psychologically for losing what you've always taken for granted: running water and electricity, in my case for a week.

Toilets didn't flush, water didn't come from the showerhead, and food wouldn't remain cold in the refrigerator.

I would be lying if I said it wasn't distressing, carefully portioning out drinking water so as not to use too much, preparing very simple meals that didn't include an oven or microwave, not having phone access to call the outside world, and loss of air conditioning and fans in the Baja desert heat. However, compared to losing a home and all belongings, this was a small inconvenience. It gave me more of an appreciation of how difficult life in the poorer communities can be for those who live without access to power and running water on a daily basis.

The hurricane was just not one collective story of Baja being slammed by a terrible storm. When you are here and talk to people, you immediately understand that it's really thousands of individual tragedies. I'll never know the names of all the people we met while giving aid, but they truly touched us by their individual stories and their optimism.

God bless you.  
Barbara

## Mission Statement

*Care for Kids La Paz* is a non-profit charity dedicated to improving the lives of impoverished children and families in La Paz, BCS, Mexico. We provide long-term support by guaranteeing access to food, health care and education to children.

Through our commitment, *Care for Kids La Paz* strives to achieve lasting improvements in the quality of life of underprivileged children giving them the opportunity to become healthy, self-reliant individuals.