



# EL NIÑO IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- 'El Niño' phenomenon causes extreme climate anomalies with impact on hydrological cycles, livelihoods, and agriculture.
- There is no clear correlation between 'El Niño' intensity and the impacts caused by drought on agricultural production.
- 'El Niño' emerges under pre-established drought conditions in Central America and the Caribbean Region.
- The negative effects exacerbated bad conditions across the continent, with particular impact in the Dry Corridor of Central American, La Española Island, dry areas of Colombia, and flood-prone zones in South America.
- 'El Niño' could negatively affect the Primera season of 2016 in Central America due to a late and irregular start of the rainy season.

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

- According to the XLIX Climate Forum, the El Niño phenomenon is entering a phase of decline, yet it still presents a direct threat and challenge to food security. Latin America is already a region particularly vulnerable to climate change and variability. El Niño aggravates these conditions by bringing poor spatial and temporal distribution of rainfalls, impacting people's food and nutrition security and livelihoods. In Central America and the Caribbean, the rainy season from May to July is likely to see a poor distribution of rainfall during a critical stage of the crop development, which would significantly affect crop production.
- As El Niño worsens, it puts additional strain on existing capacities and increases vulnerability among Latin America and the Caribbean's populations, further soliciting the need for humanitarian intervention and response.
- El Niño has affected LAC in different ways:
  - ⇒ It exacerbated the drought in Central America, especially in the Dry Corridor, severely affecting food security following a fourth year of drought and extended dry spells;
  - ⇒ Intensifying the drought in the Caribbean, especially in Haiti, and in the north of South America;
  - ⇒ Severe weather events throughout South America including intense floods along the Pacific coast of Ecuador, Peru and Chile, and drought in the highlands of these countries. Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina will likely see more intense rainfall (CIIFEN, 2015);
  - ⇒ These extreme weather events have affected thousands of people through agricultural losses, loss of homes, damages to infrastructure, landslides, and loss of life.
- What has been one of the strongest El Niño's in history is reportedly now transitioning to a La Niña phenomenon which has the potential to enhance the Atlantic Hurricane Season in 2016. The surface water temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean continue to show positive anomalies linked to El Niño. Although in decreasing trend, these anomalies are expected to continue for the period of May to July 2016 incising in a more active than normal Hurricane season. As for the Pacific, less activity is anticipated.

## IMPACT OF EL NIÑO



### CENTRAL AMERICA

- The continued impact of the 2014 drought followed by a rainfall deficit at the beginning of the 2015 *primera* cropping cycle, caused significant losses in food production.
- The losses in crop production were more evident among small subsistence farmers and agricultural day laborers from the Dry corridor of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, increasing their vulnerability to food insecurity.
- Assessments conducted by WFP and partners between December 2015 and February 2016 show the continued effects of drought in the Central America dry corridor. An estimated 1.6 million people in Central America are suffering moderate or severe food insecurity.

Country	Number of Food Insecure
Guatemala	915,000
Honduras*	461,000
El Salvador	190,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,566,000</b>

\*Results are pending final government endorsement

- For 2016, FEWSNET forecasted drier than average weather conditions and higher than average temperatures in most Central America due to the ongoing El Niño phenomenon. As such, the 2015 drought effects rolled over to the 2016 *postrera* cropping cycle and caused the *postrera* to develop under limited conditions. Irregular returns of crop production are expected in all Central American countries.
- If drought conditions persists for the 2016 *primera* cropping cycle, small subsistence farmers living in the Dry Corridor of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras would experience a third (or more) consecutive year of crop losses. Losses would translate to higher vulnerability in food insecurity especially for those households relying on one single crop cycle (*primera*) for staple grains.
- WFP has conducted follow up food security analysis in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Results indicated that food insecurity remains at elevated levels and sustained assistance is required.

## SOUTH AMERICA

- In Bolivia, the El Niño phenomenon has changed rainfall patterns throughout the country. Increased precipitation levels have caused floods and hailstorms in the country's eastern region, while the southwest region is experiencing severe droughts, resulting in the drying out of Bolivia's second largest lake. As of April 2016, the Bolivian Ministry of Civil Defense is reporting a total of 132,700 families adversely affected by the events, and 81,000 hectares of devastated farm land in 8 out of 9 departments, where 152 municipalities have declared a state of emergency.
- In Colombia, President Santos expressed his concerns over the impact of El Niño and called Colombians to save water and energy. While some regions experienced drought and an increase in wild fires due to high temperatures, other regions experienced heavy rains causing floods and landslides. By January 2016, about 4 million ha for agriculture and livestock have been affected and agricultural production dropped by 5%. OCHA estimated that approximately 550,000 people have been affected by floods, droughts, and wild fires.
- Ecuador has lost more than USD 7,100 million due to El Niño. It is foreseen that by spring 2016, the production will drop as follows: husked rice 16%, flint maize 22%, sugar 40% and banana 30%. This will decrease the food security of vulnerable households as well as the local and national economy. Ecuador has a National Action Plan for El Niño.
- In Paraguay, during the months of November and December 2015, heavy rains led to an increase in the water level of the Paraguay and Parana rivers, causing them to overflow. The resulting floods adversely affected already vulnerable households living on the river edge in the departments of Concepcion, San Pedro, Misiones, Central, Ñeembucú, Amambay, Presidente Hayes, and Asuncion. Approximately 166,635 people (33,327 households) were affected in the 8 departments, with 76,000 flood victims in Asuncion alone, the capital of Paraguay. Out of these, 60,000 people were displaced to 124 shelters scattered throughout the city. As of March 2016, the Paraguayan Meteorology Department forecasted more rains and an additional rise in water levels for June, which could further worsen the situation of the already vulnerable population living near the Parana and Paraguay rivers.
- In Peru, by February 2016, a state of emergency was declared due to the drought in the provinces of Arequipa, Puno, Tacna, and Moqueguav. By the end of March 2016, the government had invested more than 13 million Soles in emergency mitigation actions against the drought. On the other hand, the coast of Peru has been affected by heavy rains. Rain and flooding has occurred in the departments of Junín, Ancash, La Libertad, San Martin, Cusco and Apurimac Moquegua.

## THE CARIBBEAN

- For a third consecutive year and due to the ongoing El Niño phenomenon, Haiti is experiencing one of the worst droughts in recent decades. The majority of households (81%) reported that their 2015 spring/summer harvest was affected by the drought. Out of these households, 72% indicated to have lost more than 80% of their production. An emergency food security assessment conducted by WFP and the Haitian National Coordination for Food Security Office (CNSA),

estimated that country-wide, 3.6 million persons (33% of the population) are food insecure. Approximately 1.5 million persons (14% of the population) are severely food insecure. Because households have experienced several back-to-back poor harvests in the past 3 years, stress, crisis, and emergency livelihood coping mechanisms have been adopted. As food insecure households are already applying negative coping mechanisms and considering that the 2015 spring harvest accounts for over 60% of the national annual production, possibilities of recovery are limited even with a successful 2016 winter harvest. On the other hand, recent floods have affected more than 10,000; cholera continues to be a recurring problem, with over 7,800 cases and 96 deaths by the end of February. Although the rainy season has not officially started yet, several departments of the country, especially the North, Grand Anse and West, have already been affected by floods. According to a report by the Civil Protection Directorate (DPC) on 03 March, more than 10,000 homes were flooded in the northern and western regions.

- Currently in Cuba, the El Niño phenomenon remains a threat, without negative impacts for the country. However, there is a risk of heavy rains in the months ahead which could have a serious impact on the country.

## WFP RESPONSE

### CENTRAL AMERICA

- Between 2014 and 2015, WFP provided assistance to approximately one million people annually primarily through cash based transfers (CBT).
- WFP has supported national relief responses and recovery efforts from the effects of the on-going drought, exacerbated by the effect of El Niño, especially during the last part of 2015. Immediate support was provided to drought-affected food-insecure populations and facilitated recovery through asset creation and trainings, with a view of laying the foundation for a transition to resilience-building through ongoing WFP programmes and capacity development activities at the regional and country levels.
- WFP has been continuously assessing the food security needs of drought-affected populations in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.
- WFP is providing assistance through August 2016, when the *Postrera* harvest is expected, prioritizing severely food insecure population, especially those benefitting only from one harvest, targeting 600,000 people in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.
- Requirements for the period June through November are US\$34 million and shortfalls for the same period are US\$16 million.

### SOUTH AMERICA

Since December 2015, WFP has been implementing *IRA-Preparedness* projects (IR-P), valued at over \$1 million to assist the governments of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Paraguay and Peru with the aim to support governments in preparation and mitigation of the possible effects of El Niño.

Country	Approved Budget
Bolivia - Nov 2015 / Jan 2016	103,683
Colombia - Feb / Apr 2016	237,000
Ecuador – Feb / Apr 2016	208,251
Paraguay - Nov 2015 / Jan 2016	51,788
Peru - Nov 2015 / Jan 2016	183,691
Haiti	226,460

### Bolivia

- Government -WFP joint logistics workshops have been carried out to identify the priority needs and to strengthen government's logistics capacities and improve telecommunications in emergencies.
- A mobile storage unit has been acquired and the Government has allocated the land in the town of Rurrenabaque for its installation. A warehouse, currently under construction, will allow to store food and non-food items for a vast area affected by floods in the past, but could not be covered by the lack of storage.

### Colombia

- Despite the government's reasonably good institutional capacity at national level, WFP Colombia is assisting with an IRP designed to enhance the government's capacity, and support the creation of early warning systems, joint contingency plans and food and nutrition security plans with government institutions.
- Additionally, the CO assisted drought affected communities in La Guajira by building food, fodder and seed banks. WFP strengthened capacities of Corpoguajira and the Red Cross to revamp early warning bulletins, integrating information on drought, desertification, weather and climate predictions.
- In partnership with FAO and OXFAM, the CO is presenting a proposal to ECHO to assist 1,800 people most affected by drought. The CO also assisted communities affected by rains in Choco department through the PRRO and an additional proposal is being presented to ECHO to assist another 4,600 people affected in Choco.
- Currently, WFP Colombia is working on the development of the emergency needs assessment methodologies –at household and community levels. The CO will implement a community survey with government partners in April.

### Ecuador

- The Government of Ecuador asked the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) for humanitarian and technical support due to the El Niño effects requesting WFP specific technical support in the areas of warehouse management, need assessments and CBT, among others.
- For the period of February through April 2016, WFP supported the government in strengthening government staff emergency preparedness and response capacities at the municipal level through trainings on EFSA, humanitarian supply chain and initial needs assessment. WFP also provided emergency kits and early warning trainings.
- The IR preparedness also facilitated a long term agreement between WFP and key supermarkets to provide kits (commodity vouchers) as well as a CBT (e-voucher) solution in response to El Niño related emergency situations. The LTA proved extremely useful to facilitate a rapid response to the 16 April earthquake reflecting the value of investments in preparedness actions. As a result of these preparedness efforts, WFP assistance reached the affected population in the first 72 hours. Given that the LTA had been signed just one day before the earthquake, this experience has also helped to identify potential bottlenecks that can be eliminated to ensure an even quicker response in the future.

### Paraguay

- WFP has assisted approximately 6,000 families/30,000 people affected by the floods in North of Asunción.

- The EFSA in Asuncion has been completed and the results showed that 45% of the population are food insecure of which 20% are considered to be severely food insecurity. }
- WFP accompanied an UNDAC mission in the middle of April.
- WFP leads the Food Security Sector and is working with the Humanitarian Country Team on the Strategic Response Plan as well as in the formulation of a CERF request.
- As of now, the Humanitarian Country team is preparing the Emergency Response Plan in view of the possible worsening of the situation starting in June 2016.

### Peru

- In addition to the US\$650 million allocated in 2015 for El Niño emergency preparedness actions, the government is also allocating US\$880 million in 2016 to further prepare responses in priority areas (communication, health, education and river defences and to a lesser extent humanitarian assistance).
- In 2015 the WFP response to El Niño included the provision of technical assistance to the National Civil Defense Institute of Peru (INDECI) in areas such as food warehouse management during emergencies, producing vulnerability maps showing food insecurity and vulnerability in recurrent disasters, conducting an Emergency Preparedness Capacity Index (EPCI, 2015), and facilitating training and planning sessions for CBT to be implemented through the government.
- In addition to the IR-P, WFP was involved in monitoring the food security situation in the country as El Niño progressed. WFP and INDECI prepared a draft agreement in the event that Peru would require WFP's assistance with food purchases due to stronger than expected El Niño effects. Activities implemented include: support in telecommunications and coordination during emergencies; capacity development for food assistance through rapid assessments of the impact of El Niño on food security; and strengthening logistics in emergency capacities such as quality control for food warehouse or commodity management.



- WFP previously assisted 120,000 people affected by drought through the PRRO with General Food Distribution (GFD) and FFA/FFT with both food transfers and CBT.
- Food stocks are normally prepositioned to cover the potential relief needs of 300,000 people during hurricane season. This year, the majority of the contingency stock was used to respond to the severe ongoing drought through GFD prior to the launch of the EMOP.
- The IR-P allowed the CO to strengthen its emergency preparedness and response capacities in light of the exacerbation of drought due to El Niño phenomenon and the hurricane season in addition to political instability and a rise in criminality.
- The main objective was to conduct an EFSA in the drought affected communities to examine the effects and identify need. Through the IR-P, the data and information related to the population most affected by drought was collected and presented to humanitarian actors and to the Government.
- Following the EFSA, WFP launched an EMOP to assist one million drought affected people through GFD using primarily cash based transfers, followed by a small early recovery component.



### Central American Regional

The Central American region is facing the consequences of the strongest El Niño in a decade and FEWSNET has confirmed that this is one of the worst droughts in Central America in the last 35 years. Over 4.1 million people have been affected, with 2.2 million people suffering moderate or severe food insecurity. Regional PRRO 200490 responds effectively to emergencies in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua through a combination of cash-based transfers and in-kind food. WFP continues to support national relief responses and recovery efforts through asset creation and trainings.

### Central American Regional PRRO 200490



### Haiti

The number of food insecure has doubled in the last six months as a result of a third consecutive year of drought, with some 3.6 million people food insecure and a further 1.5 million severely food insecure. WFP is implementing an EMOP for 6 months covering the period March-September 2016 to provide assistance to 1 million affected by the drought. The EMOP will complement the planned interventions by the Government and NGOs, as well as WFP's on-going activities in the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) and Development project (DEV) which provides assistance through nutrition, cash for assets and school feeding to both drought and non-drought affected populations.

### Haiti EMOP 200949



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Donors are represented in alphabetical order

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