

Central America

Bi-weekly Operational Update

Operations: **Regional context**

Hurricanes Eta/Iota has resulted in additional protection risks and increased needs in high-risk communities already affected by violence and insecurity in the region. Affected populations are unable to return to their homes due to high water levels and continued rainfall. Protection monitoring indicates that the situation in shelters is dire in terms of WASH, prevention of COVID-19, basic supplies and SGBV prevention and response.

Evacuations continue as rainfall has yet to cease in mountain areas and rivers continue to rise in Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala. Humanitarian access to urban and coastal communities also remains limited. In Nicaragua, 60% of the territory has been affected, including Puerto Cabezas and Bilwi (Northern Caribbean) and the South Pacific area. In Jinotega and Matagalpa, further deaths and damage to infrastructure and housing could be expected due to landslides. In Honduras, humanitarian access is still limited in some areas of Cortes Department, including the surroundings of San Pedro Sula. The municipalities with the highest number of shelters (San Pedro Sula and Choloma) were also the main areas of origin and reception of IDPs prior to Eta, according to preliminary findings of the Multi-sectorial Rapid Assessment. In addition, a high number of persons with specific needs, particularly older persons, persons with disabilities and women at risk have been identified.

In Guatemala, people of concern affected by tropical storms were identified in Izabal department and 10 persons in Petén were unable to start their asylum process in Guatemala City due to road conditions. UNHCR continues to advocate for a comprehensive

response that includes persons of concern within the framework of government and local interventions and provides support through NFI kits (mosquito repellents; towels; buckets; mattresses), medical masks, soap bars, individual hygiene kits, and family food kits. In addition, psychosocial support, including psychological first aid, individual counselling and group sessions, as well as recreational activities are being held in shelters to support those displaced by the natural disasters. Refugee Housing Units have been provided to store humanitarian aid and to scale-up the shelter capacity in the most affected areas.

In Honduras, UNHCR and partners assisted 1,973 beneficiaries in shelters located in four prioritized affected municipalities in Cortes Department. The assistance includes distributions of hygiene kits, PPEs, food kits and provision of specialized protection services such as psychosocial support, health care and protection information. A [joint Flash Appeal](#) was launched with requirements totaling USD69.2M. UNHCR has requested USD2.36M to carry out life-saving interventions and emergency activities, including USD1.25M to scale-up protection in communities; USD950k for NFIs, recovery of community centres, and shelter for persons at risk; and USD161k for WASH activities in community centres and schools in at risk areas.

Coordination with partners, within UN Country Teams and Humanitarian Teams and with governments is ongoing to support the emergency response in the affected countries. In addition, UNHCR continues monitoring the developing situation with community leaders, government and local authorities, and engaging with the private sector to join the humanitarian response.

Regional funding overview

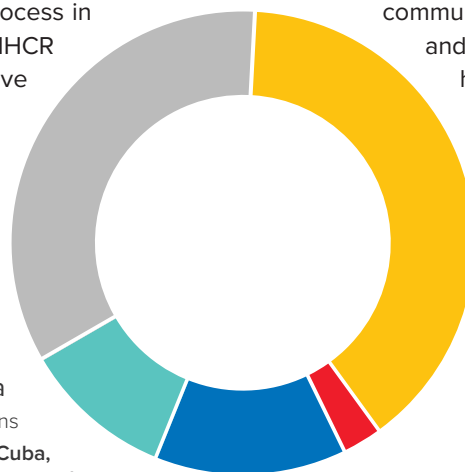
as of 17 November 2020

127.1M

financial requirements for Central America for 2020 including requirements for the operations

and activities in **Panama, Belize, El Salvador, Cuba, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Guatemala.**

For further details consult reporting.unhcr.org



65% funded

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

Update on country activities

COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS FRAMEWORK (MIRPS)

• Over 70 government officials from MIRPS countries participated in a three-day online course on Asylum Systems and Refugee Integration, organized by the Government of Spain, as part of its role as the Pro-tempore Presidency of the MIRPS Support Platform. The exchange was designed in response to requests made by the MIRPS countries on applicable legislation, the use of technology in RSD and registration processes, the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in host countries, the protection of unaccompanied children and combating human trafficking.

COORDINATION WITH LOCAL & NATIONAL GOVERNMENT/ STRENGTHENING CENTRAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

• In **El Salvador**, the capacity-building programme for the National Directorate of Attention to Victims of Forced Migration (DNAVMF) and the Local Offices for Attention of Victims (OLAVs), led by UNHCR through the Protection Cluster, continued with two sessions on humanitarian assistance standards for 47 officials. In addition, UNHCR held five training sessions for 45 representatives from the Municipal Committees for the Prevention of Violence (CMPV) of Usulután, San Gotera, San Miguel, Mejicanos and Zacatecoluca municipalities. The capacity building sessions focused on increasing skills and knowledge on national legislation on internal displacement and protection mechanisms available to IDPs, as part of the creation of provisional local assistance referral pathways for victims of forced displacement.

• In **El Salvador**, informative materials for persons of concern and a short-animated video on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) aimed at displaced children has been produced and will be distributed in shelters and safe spaces supported by UNHCR.

• In **Guatemala**, 250 officials from the Transit Department of the National Civil Police received training on the topic “International protection for LGBTI people” to create awareness on the importance of inclusivity and the identification of international protection needs of this community. The Ombudsperson’s Office, through its mobile project the Procumóvil, disseminated information about their programmes and services with authorities and local communities in the municipalities in Chiquimula and Huehuetenango departments. UNHCR and partners installed a charging station for phones in Tecun Uman, so people in need of international protection and the community can charge their devices while receiving information on their rights. [See more.](#)

• In **Honduras**, UNHCR held training sessions on conducting RSD analysis and assessments with 26 human rights officers of the National Migration Institute and members of the Refugee Commission.

• In **Panama**, 135 people of concern were provided information, orientation, and legal assistance, and 12 refugees and asylum seekers received psychosocial assistance.

PROTECTION (INCLUDING CBP & SGBV)

• In **El Salvador**, UNHCR and partner World Vision unveiled a newly constructed playground area to the municipality of Chalatenango, in the La Sierpe neighbourhood to promote recreational activities on a community level as part of a strategy to prevent child recruitment by gangs.

• In **Guatemala**, UNHCR conducted assessments focused on access to education for children of concern. Out of the 44 children consulted, only 28 are in formal education. This will be used as baseline to address issues related to access to education in the context of COVID-19.

• In **Honduras**, psychosocial support and recreational activities were carried out for 30 children and their families in a shelter in Tegucigalpa.

CHILD PROTECTION

REINFORCING SHELTERS & SAFE SPACE NETWORKS

• In **Belize**, UNHCR partner HUMANA, in collaboration with Bella Vista’s village council, is improving the community football field in an effort to provide safe spaces for all youth in the community, including persons of interest to UNHCR.

• In **Guatemala**, partners continued protection monitoring of the temporary shelters in the municipality of Jocotán and Izabal which have been assisting persons affected by the storms. Eight Hondurans in mixed movements and asylum seekers were provided

with information. UNHCR has been also providing assistance and temporary shelter for asylum seekers, refugees and their host communities during the emergency response. [See more.](#) One refugee housing unit (RHU) was installed at the Valle Nuevo border, municipality of Jalpatagua, Department of Jutiapa, to provide health assistance for people in mixed movements.

• In **Honduras**, the Permanent Commission of Contingencies (COPECO) requested UNHCR’s support to review the installation of an RHU in Tegucigalpa, where there are currently 16 RHUs established as contingency shelter, in case the existing infrastructure exceeds shelter capacity. 150 RHUs are being distributed throughout San Pedro Sula to support the emergency response to the devastation by the recent tropical storms.

INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

- In **Costa Rica**, the European Union and UNHCR will support the implementation of the national Zones Plan as a mechanism for the safe and controlled entry of persons across the northern border, protecting their right to seek asylum. This initiative will also strengthen monitoring of the northern and southern borders for early identification of persons with international protection needs and the provision of humanitarian assistance to persons in severe socioeconomic vulnerability.
- In **El Salvador**, UNHCR, as co-leader of the Protection Cluster, took part in a multi-sectorial monitoring mission with UNICEF, IOM, WFP and OCHA convened by the Ministry of Governance to verify the conditions of the shelters established for the preventive evacuation of communities vulnerable to the tropical storm Iota. Five shelters were visited in the Municipalities of El Paraíso (Chalatenango), Nuevo Cuscatlán (La Libertad), and Soyapango, Santa Tecla and San Salvador (San Salvador). UNHCR delivered informational handouts and psychosocial support resources for persons with protection needs.
- In **Honduras**, the UN Resident Coordinator went on mission to San Pedro Sula and, jointly with UNHCR and other UN Agencies, met with the Mayor of San Pedro Sula. Participants discussed how to improve a coordinated emergency response. The Municipality of San Pedro Sula currently manages 75 shelters hosting 12,352 persons. The municipality have reported severe damage to health centers and schools as a result of the recent storms. UNHCR will conduct a working session on post-emergency recovery, aligned with both the Municipal Master Plan and the SDGs, as part of the coordinated emergency response.
- In **Guatemala**, the Humanitarian Country Team is conducting a Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Needs Analysis (MIRNA) with CONRED targeting key affected areas to collect sectorial information (nutrition, health, protection, WASH, among others) to response to impact of Storm Eta.
- In **Panama**, UNHCR, UNFPA, HIAS, and NRC launched an awareness campaign on gender-based violence and its impact on refugee and displaced women and girls, in coordination with the Women's Office of the Municipality of Panama from November 3 to December 7. The campaign sensitizes the public on SGBV against asylum seekers, refugees, and migrant population and disseminates emergency contact numbers for GBV survivors.

DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE & CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS (CBI)

- In **Belize**, 130 cases/ 292 individuals received cash assistance to meet food, rent, medical and documentation assistance needs.
- In **Costa Rica**, 20,000 supplies were delivered by the UNCT, including UNHCR, for indigenous peoples in Talamanca, including clothes, rubber boots, telecommunications equipment, educational materials for children, as well as masks, alcohol gel, baby diapers and hygiene kits.
- In **Cuba**, UNHCR is coordinating with the universities where refugees study and the ministries responsible for them, to identify refugee students in a more vulnerable situation with a view to distributing assistance in the form of CBI, and eventually also in kind.
- In **El Salvador**, UNHCR delivered personal protective equipment including 8,500 masks, 85 boxes of gloves, 1,750 protective glasses and 850 gallons of antibacterial gel to key institutions: General Directorate for Migration and Foreigners (DGME); Salvadoran Institute for the Comprehensive Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA); National Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU), the Office of the Prosecutor (PGR), amongst others who are in direct contact with the general public and persons of concern, including deported persons with protection needs, IDPs, persons at risk of displacement and with vulnerable profiles such as LGBTI and women at risk.
- In **Guatemala**, 17 individuals were registered, 29 CBI eligibility interviews were conducted, and 29 beneficiaries were provided with cash assistance. A total of 412 families have been enrolled in the CBI programme since May. WASH kits were delivered to the Health Department in Izabal, overseeing several health centers which will benefit from safe drinking water, face masks, soaps and other supplies to benefit the local population, refugees and persons in transit. WASH items and water filtrations units have been delivered to the local health and justice institutions in Las Cruces for communities affected by the tropical storms.
- In **Honduras**, 880 family received NFI kits (mosquito repellents, towels, buckets, and mattresses). Additionally, 48,450 medical masks, 10,800 soap bars, 10,500 individual hygiene kits, 1,224 family food kits are being distributed throughout San Pedro Sula.
- In **Panama**, 37 families received CBI for food, benefiting 49 people, and 12 families were supported with rent payment benefiting 38 persons. A donation of personal protection equipment and materials was carried out by UN Country Team, including UNCHR, for persons affected by the hurricane and tropical storm ETA and IOTA in Panama. In addition, UNHCR donated 15,000 bars of soap to the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES) to support their response the humanitarian emergency in Chiriquí province; and 10,000 bars of soap were handed out to Ministry of Interior in support of its response to the situation in Darien province.

DURABLE SOLUTIONS & LIVELIHOODS

- In **Belize**, as part of UNHCR's livelihood strategy, twenty-three persons of concern are benefiting from a five-day entrepreneurship training, which include vocational skills training in pastry and sewing conducted by implementing partner HUMANA.
- In **El Salvador**, UNHCR in collaboration with the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU) provided a workshop on women's economic autonomy and empowerment for 50 participants. 30 entrepreneurship initiatives were selected as part of a joint project to support the livelihoods of displaced persons and those at risk. The recipients will receive seed capital to carry out small-scale businesses, as well as skills training on customer service, quality assurance and pricing of their products and services.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD



Teams across the region join the civil society and authorities to respond to humanitarian needs after hurricanes hit Central America



Since Eta hit the region on 3 November, heavy winds and rains have damaged homes, roads, energy infrastructure and health centers. Entire crops have been destroyed and with them, many sources of livelihoods have disappeared. Mudslides have buried whole communities and over 120,000 people have been forced to evacuate their homes across Central America, where brutal gang violence and persecution had already forced nearly 1 million people to flee.



[Learn more.](#)

“The impact of the storm comes amid an already critical economic contraction in the region as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing further hardship to forcibly

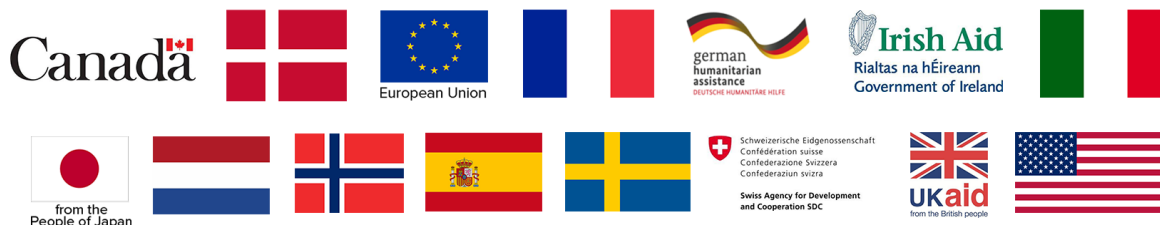
displaced people and host communities alike. Increased movements across borders are now more likely, including of people fleeing violence and persecution,” said Giovanni Bassu, UNHCR’s Regional Representative for Central America and Cuba.

Rising temperatures are changing rainfall patterns at the global level. In Central America, climate change is increasing the intensity of both rain and droughts, particularly across the region known as the “dry corridor”. Such phenomena can exacerbate poverty and conditions of insecurity which continue to drive people to flee their communities.

We thank the contributions of our donors

updated to 17 November 2020

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have provided generous and timely support to the Coronavirus Emergency Situation globally, and countries in Central America, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked funding.



Pooled funds: COVID-19 MTF

Private donors

Unilever, USA for UNHCR, and Private donors Australia – Germany – Italy - Japan – Lebanon - Republic of Korea – Spain – Sweden - United Kingdom - United States of America

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