



Humanitarian Action for Children

unicef 

Response to Hurricanes Eta and Iota

An estimated 9.2 million people (including 3.5 million children) have been affected by heavy rainfall, life-threatening flash flooding and landslides caused by Hurricanes Eta and Iota in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.¹ Other areas in Mexico and Colombia have been also impacted.² Over 160,000 people have been displaced and hosted in shelters, including 64,000 children³, and need access to protection, food, health, nutrition, water, sanitation and basic services. In some affected communities, access to basic services was already limited and is now worsened by the effects of the Hurricanes; restoration of basic services in such places is now urgent⁴. Thousands of families have lost their homes and livelihoods, many already been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. At least 3.4 million people need urgent support, including 1.3 million children in the most affected communities in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua⁵. These estimations are expected to increase considering that Iota compounded the effects of Eta, expanding the areas of need. With high numbers of people in shelters, there is increased COVID-19 infection and protection risks, especially for girls⁶. Eta and Iota are affecting children and families already devastated by the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic: school closures, loss of jobs, declining migrant remittances, rising violence against children and women, and disruptions in access to water and sanitation and to key health services, including vaccinations for young children. Prior to COVID-19, at least 5.2 million people in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras were already facing significant humanitarian needs related to migration flows, violence, internal displacement, food insecurity and poverty⁷. Among affected areas, there are remote indigenous communities where access and language barriers challenge relief efforts. A potential surge in population movements, including internal displacement and cross-border migration, could further compound the situation.

Humanitarian strategy

UNICEF is prioritising its action in the four most affected countries in Central America: Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and Belize. UNICEF planned coverage may expand to other countries in the region upon finalization of needs assessments and inter-agency planning documents.

UNICEF response strategy is adapted to the needs in country and focuses on ensuring that children and families in shelters and affected communities have access to basic services including protection, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services – including Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM), health, education and early childhood development, and prevention of gender-based violence (GBV).

With large population groups living in shelters, the risk of COVID-19 is increased. Ensuring availability of safe water and adequate sanitation, risk communication and minimum health services, personal protective equipment (PPE) items, implementation of biosafety protocols, social distancing, and other measures, will be crucial to prevent the spread of the virus and are essential components of UNICEF's response. In affected communities, where conditions allow, UNICEF will support efforts for the restoration of basic services, including rehabilitation of WASH systems and damaged schools, protection and GBV services, routine vaccination and nutritional care, among other.

UNICEF remains a key humanitarian and development partner in the affected countries, leading and facilitating coordination efforts among clusters and sectoral groups - particularly in WASH, education, nutrition and Child Protection. UNICEF will link its humanitarian action and development programming to strengthen policies and systems and enhance resilience of affected populations.

UNICEF is part of interagency mechanisms and its response plans are aligned with interagency priorities. UNICEF efforts will complement actions of authorities and other partners working in providing food assistance and overall support in shelters. The Honduras Humanitarian Country team issued a joint Flash Appeal, UNICEF requirements are in line with this inter-agency appeal⁸.

UNICEF will work in collaboration and coordination with local and national governments, whose capacities have been surpassed and with its existing partners, developing new partnerships where needed, to deliver urgent support and restore access to basic services for children, women and families in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Belize, that have been left in an extremely vulnerable situation after the impact of Hurricanes Eta and Iota.

Total people in need

3.4 Million⁹

Total children (<18) in need

1.3 Million¹⁰

Total people to be reached

646,943¹¹

Total children to be reached

327,605¹²

Programme targets¹³

Nutrition

- 130,000 Children 6-59 months screened for acute malnutrition
- 35,000 Pregnant and breastfeeding women receiving micronutrient supplementation

Health

- 126,000 Children under 1 year receiving three doses of DTP-containing vaccine

WASH

- 430,000 people accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene
- 433,000 people reached with critical water, sanitation and hygiene supplies (including hygiene items) and services

Child protection

- 67,000 Children and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support

Education

- 158,000 children accessing formal and non-formal education, including early learning

GBViE / PSEA

- 57,000 Women, girl and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention or response actions.
- 50,000 Women and girls receiving Dignity Kits

Social Protection

- 18,900 households benefitting from new or additional social transfers from governments with UNICEF technical assistance support

Communication for Development

- 1,000,000 people reached with messages on access to services

Results from

In the affected countries, UNICEF, together with partners in the field, pre-positioned supplies and technical capacity which enabled immediate response:

In Nicaragua, UNICEF is providing WASH supplies for 15,000 families. Additionally, 90 water tanks of 5,000 liters, 3,000 plastic receptacles for water storage and 1,000 family hygiene kits have been delivered to affected communities. UNICEF is mapping child protection and GBV available services in the affected areas and is supporting the development of referral mechanisms for GBV cases. 50 kits for psychosocial support have already been delivered, benefitting 2,000 children in shelters. UNICEF and partners are reaching more than 100,000 people with key messages including on hygiene practices, prevention of violence and promotion of self-care.

In Guatemala, UNICEF with local authorities, is distributing 4,900 personal hygiene kits, providing logistical support to teams deployed to monitor the situation of health services, and disseminating prevention messages via community radios in local indigenous languages. Over 5,300 children have been reached by UNICEF-supported nutrition mobile brigades, with critical life-saving nutrition interventions, including timely identification of acute malnutrition, provision of micronutrient supplementation, and breastfeeding and maternal nutrition counselling to pregnant and lactating women. UNICEF is also supporting the rehabilitation of 81 schools; prioritizing repairs of classrooms and sanitation facilities, critical for a safe return to schools in early 2021.

In Honduras, over 29,000 children are benefiting from improved conditions in shelters, including through the provision of mental health support, child protection services and life-saving supplies; over 1,600 vulnerable families received in-kind social transfers from local government authorities with UNICEF support. 4,600 people in shelters are being reached through WASH services, and over 71,000 are expected to benefit from WASH support. UNICEF has provided immediate protection services to 113 children and adolescents suspected to have been separated from their caregivers.

In Belize, UNICEF and partners are providing PPE items, blankets, bed sheets and tarpaulin for 3,000 people, along with education kits to 120 families. UNICEF is supporting critical lifesaving interventions through the distribution of over 1,700 supplemented food packages to approximately 500 affected families, including 1,050 children. Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) messages on feeding practices and WASH, especially around handwashing and water purification, are disseminated in both English and Spanish. Hygiene kits and ECD play kits are being delivered for 354 affected families, including 769 children.

As part of its regular programme, UNICEF is supporting national authorities' responses in Colombia, El Salvador, Panama and Costa Rica.

Funding requirements

UNICEF is urgently appealing for US\$42.6 million for six months¹⁴, to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs of children and their families affected by Hurricane Eta and Iota in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Based on preliminary data and needs assessments on the impact of Hurricanes Eta and Iota, UNICEF plans to reach over 646,000 people, including 327,000 children, with lifesaving and gender-sensitive supplies and services, in shelters and communities, in the most affected and vulnerable areas.

This funding requirement is provisional and subject to change as UNICEF continues to assess the impacts of Hurricane Iota which will likely increase the humanitarian needs in these and other countries in the region. Without the requested funding, UNICEF will be unable to maintain and expand programme capacities in the field through pre-existing and new partnerships.

As UNICEF's response strategy is strongly linked with its regular development programming, it will address the urgent humanitarian needs of the most affected, while also contributing to building more resilient and shock-responsive systems. In addition to country-level needs, a regional funding requirement is included to cover coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and technical and quality assurance support for country offices.

Sector ¹⁵	2020 requirements (US\$)
Nutrition	2,711,209
Health	1,388,523
Water Sanitation and Hygiene ¹⁶	30,854,673
Child Protection, GBVIE and PSEA	3,572,200
Education / ECD	2,296,800
Social Protection	1,263,000
Regional Office Technical Capacity	500,000
Total	42,586,405

¹ Sources: Belize (National Emergency Management Organization -NEMO), Costa Rica (National Emergency Commission -CNE), El Salvador (Government of El Salvador), Guatemala (National Coordinator for the Reduction of Disasters -CONRED), Honduras (National Permanent Contingencies Commission -COPECO), Nicaragua (OCHA Humanitarian Snapshot, 4 December 2020), Panama (National Operations Center -CON).

² OCHA, 'Latin America & the Caribbean 2020 Hurricane Season - Situation Report No. 4', 20 November 2020.

³ According to official sources by the time of drafting this document (See Footnote 1. For Nicaragua -Government of Nicaragua). Figures for children affected and children in shelters are estimated by UNICEF according to population distribution in country. The number of people in shelters fluctuates daily as some families start returning home.

⁴ Already compromised access to safe WASH services has been further deteriorated. In Honduras, for instance, early assessments indicated that 83% of water supply systems in assessed areas had been affected (30 key local informants) <<https://bit.ly/3gsPu0Y>>.

⁵ Based on estimations by UNICEF and other partners, among those affected by Eta.

⁶ As of 7 December 2020, over 611,000 COVID-19 cases and more than 13,000 deaths had been reported in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

Source: Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering, 7 December 2020. Cases of waterborne diseases (i.e. hepatitis) and other infectious diseases (incl. malaria falciparum) have been reported among people in shelters. Furthermore, incidents of gender-based violence and family separation have been identified among population in shelters (see UNICEF Eta/Iota sitreps <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/lac/situation-reports>).

⁷ OCHA, 'Panorama de las necesidades humanitarias - El Salvador, Guatemala y Honduras', March 2020.

⁸ OCHA, 'Honduras: Flash Appeal - Tropical Storm Eta, 19 November 2020. <<https://reliefweb.int/report/honduras/honduras-flash-appeal-tropical-storm-eta-november-2020>>

⁹ Including Belize, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Estimated by UNICEF according to preliminary assessments in areas affected by Eta. Vulnerability criteria (i.e. poverty rates) have been applied in the most affected areas for estimating population in need. Figures for Honduras are aligned with the interagency Flash Appeal prior Iota (OCHA, 'Honduras: Flash Appeal - Tropical Storm Eta, 19 November 2020). Figures are provisional and subject to change upon finalization of Iota needs assessments and inter-agency planning documents.

¹⁰ Calculated by UNICEF, according to population distribution in country, based on the estimation of people in need.

¹¹ Including: Honduras (406,329), Guatemala (135,000), Nicaragua (92,000), Belize (13,614). The total was calculated using the highest coverage programme targets at the country level (for Eta-affected populations), aiming to minimize potential double counting, as a beneficiary can be reached with one or more services. Targets are provisional and subject to change upon finalization of Iota needs assessments and inter-agency planning documents.

¹² Including: Honduras (233,255), Guatemala (51,300), Nicaragua (37,500), Belize (5,550). The total was calculated using the highest coverage programme targets at the country level (for Eta-affected populations), adding up other children-specific targets, aiming to minimize potential double counting, as a child can be reached with one or more services. Targets are provisional and subject to change upon finalization of Iota needs assessments and inter-agency planning documents.

¹³ Targets add up specific targets at country level, originally estimated in response plans for Eta-affected populations. Targets are provisional and subject to change upon finalization of Iota needs assessments and inter-agency planning documents.

¹⁴ From 18 November 2020 to 17 May 2021.

¹⁵ Communication for development funding ask, including accountability to affected populations, is integrated into sectoral responses and interventions.

¹⁶ Given the extensive damages in water systems and infrastructures, the heightened risk of COVID-19 transmission in shelters and affected communities, and the high numbers of people living in shelters; ensuring availability of safe water, functioning WASH infrastructure, and access to WASH supplies -including MHM, are critical components of UNICEF's response plan and appeal budget. This component of the response is particularly challenging in some communities with access constraints with some only accessible by sea or river, where cost of transportation of staff and materials is considerably high. Furthermore, some of the prioritized areas are vulnerable remote indigenous communities, scattered over a wide territory. In some areas, the response is more costly where sanitation is a significant component.

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