

## BUREAU FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

# Central America Assistance Overview

October 2023

### CONTEXT

---

- Central America—composed of Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama—is highly vulnerable to recurring climatic shocks and natural hazards, including droughts, earthquakes, floods, storms, and volcanic activity. These hazards—which continue to intensify due to the effects of climate change—often result in casualties, damage to infrastructure and livelihoods, and displacement.
- Recurrent droughts in the Dry Corridor—an area encompassing a majority of central Guatemala, southern and western Honduras, the whole of El Salvador, and parts of Costa Rica and Nicaragua—have diminished crop yields and generated price hikes, which decrease household purchasing power, worsening food insecurity. As of October, an estimated 2.5 million people in Guatemala and up to 1 million people in Honduras are projected to experience Crisis—ICP 3—levels of food insecurity through March 2024, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET).<sup>1</sup>
- Individuals in some areas of the region are also acutely vulnerable to the effects of structural poverty and high levels of violence, which drive displacement and protection risks. In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, approximately 9.3 million people collectively are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2023 due to compounding effects of food insecurity, lack of access to public services, and underemployment according to the UN.



### ASSISTANCE

---

- USAID/BHA partners are supporting vulnerable households with Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 funding in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to restore livelihoods, increase financial resilience, and mitigate the effects of future shocks. Program activities include financial literacy courses, establishing community savings and loans groups, business management education, and disbursing initial seed capital to restore businesses, particularly among rural households.

<sup>1</sup> The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a multi-partner initiative that developed a standardized scale to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. The IPC scale, which is comparable across countries and time, ranges from Minimal—IPC 1—to Famine—IPC 5—for acute food insecurity. IPC Phase 5 is referred to as “Catastrophe” when classifying a household and “Famine” when classifying an area. Famine conditions occur when at least 20 percent of the population in a given area face an extreme lack of food; the Global Acute Malnutrition prevalence, measured by weight-for-height z-score, exceeds 30 percent; and the mortality rate exceeds two people per 10,000 individuals per day.

- To address persistent food insecurity across the region, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) supports cash transfers for food to meet emergency food needs, as well as programs working to prevent and respond to acute malnutrition among vulnerable households. For example, in FYs 2022 and 2023, a USAID/BHA partner reached more than 38,000 individuals with approximately \$2.8 million in unconditional cash transfers in Guatemala. USAID/BHA partners also train farmers on climate-smart farming practices—such as drip irrigation, diversification of crops, and soil management—to increase crop production and build resilience to future climatic shocks.



A woman collects water from a water pump installed by USAID/BHA partner WFP in the Pata Renca Community of Guatemala. *Photo Credit: WFP Guatemala*

- USAID/BHA protection partners are implementing activities in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to provide psychosocial support, case management and referral services for women, children, and other groups at-risk of gender-based violence (GBV). Programming also establishes safe spaces throughout the community and in schools for group activities focused on addressing and preventing GBV and household violence, as well as cash assistance to meet urgent food, medical, shelter, and transportation efforts. USAID/BHA additionally funds child protection activities, including advocacy, coordination, and response efforts.
- USAID/BHA also supports early recovery, risk reduction, and resilience (ER4) activities across the region focusing on disaster risk reduction and preparedness. This assistance includes establishing early warning and response systems, providing local governments with technical assistance to improve operational capacity, and strengthening disaster-affected populations' coping and recovery strategies. For example, in informal urban settlements across Honduras' Valle de Sula Metropolitan Zone, USAID/BHA partner GOAL builds awareness related to disaster risk and neighborhood urban planning, increasing community coordination, and preparing local actors to respond to disasters. Additionally, partners such as Miyamoto International work in the region to certify Urban Search and Rescue teams to assess structural damage and conduct safe building rescues following an earthquake. Furthermore, rapid response mechanisms—including the deployment of disaster risk management specialists—allow USAID/BHA to respond to disasters induced by natural hazards within 48 hours across the region.

USAID/BHA Funding in Central America <sup>2</sup>			
	Emergency <sup>3</sup>	ER4 <sup>4</sup>	TOTAL
FY 2023	\$72,057,193	\$4,671,226	\$76,728,419

<sup>2</sup> Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of October 31, 2023. Totals include estimated value of food assistance and transportation costs at time of procurement; subject to change.

<sup>3</sup> The figure represents the sum total of bilateral and regional emergency funding regionwide of \$72,032,004, comprised of estimated totals of \$14,426,986 for El Salvador; \$27,847,004 for Guatemala; \$26,758,014 for Honduras; and \$3,000,000 for Nicaragua. The figure includes funding for programs that integrate ER4 activities with emergency response and \$25,189 additional funding in logistics support.

<sup>4</sup> The figure represents the sum total of ER4 funding regionwide, including estimated totals of \$879,996 for El Salvador; \$397,696 for Guatemala; \$1,103,534 for Honduras; and \$2,290,000 for regional programs.