

El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras – Regional Response

MAY 7, 2021

SITUATION AT A GLANCE

30.7 MILLION	10 MILLION	7 MILLION	5.5 MILLION	833,000
Estimated Total Population of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras	Estimated Number of People in Need of Humanitarian Assistance	Estimated Number of People Impacted by Hurricanes Eta and Iota in Guatemala and Honduras	Estimated Number of People in Urgent Need of Food Assistance	Estimated Number of Asylum Seekers, IDPs, and Refugees Displaced in the Region
<i>UN – March 2021</i>	<i>UN – April 2021</i>	<i>UN – December 2020</i>	<i>FEWS NET – March 2021</i>	<i>UNHCR – March 2021</i>

- Food assistance needs are likely to increase across the region prior to the beginning of staple harvests in late August, according to FEWS NET.
- New confirmed COVID-19 cases rose by 100 percent in Guatemala, 35 percent in Honduras, and 31 percent in El Salvador in April compared to March.
- DART staff continue monitoring and information-gathering trips with partners, humanitarian actors, and government counterparts in the region.



TOTAL U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING For the El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras Regional Response in FY 2021	USAID/BHA ¹	\$125,000,000
	State/PRM ²	\$69,344,000
	Total	\$194,344,000

¹USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)

²U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM)

Food Assistance Needs to Increase Until Staple Harvests Begin in August

Although the rainfall season began early across El Salvador and seasonal forecasts indicate a likelihood for favorable rainfall in May, farmers who experienced below normal income during the 2020/2021 coffee production cycle may experience difficulty in purchasing sufficient inputs to maintain typical area planted and yields during the *Primera* staple grain planting season in April to May, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). Many households who are partially dependent on labor income from the coffee sector experienced further reductions in income during the 2020/2021 season, as ongoing challenges in the sector were compounded by COVID-19 related movement restrictions and below-average harvests. Crisis—IPC 3—outcomes are likely through September among these households, particularly in Ahuachapán Department.³

In Guatemala, increasing costs of public transportation, as well as weakening demand for labor among middle and upper income households, will limit day labor opportunities during the upcoming *Primera* agricultural season, according to FEWS NET. The cost of interurban transportation in March was up 59 percent compared to March 2020, while bus transport within cities was up 45 percent. The increasing cost of transportation is limiting access to job opportunities and markets for poor households, particularly for those who live far from municipal centers. Concurrently, high transportation costs and increased international prices for yellow maize in recent months have led to above-average prices for maize and beans, which are key staples in the country. By late April, rural households have typically entered the lean season period; however, in 2021 the period when food stocks and labor opportunities are at a seasonal low began in February. Access to labor opportunities and income are likely to remain atypically low in the coming months, with many poor rural households experiencing Crisis acute food insecurity, particularly those in the Dry Corridor and those who were affected by tropical storms Eta and Iota.

In Honduras, food security is likely to deteriorate further among poor rural and urban households prior to the beginning of the *Primera* staple harvests in late August, reports FEWS NET, as households face below-normal income amidst rising food prices, particularly for beans. Reduced household income is driven primarily by government or self-imposed movement restrictions during the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and income is likely to remain below average despite reduced government restrictions and general improvements in economic activity. Despite favorable seasonal forecasts and a likelihood for near-average national level staple production, many small-scale farmers are likely to experience below average *Primera* season harvests due to elevated prices for fertilizers—which were 10 to 20 percent higher in April 2021 versus the year prior—and localized poor soil conditions, particularly in areas of Honduras that were previously flooded by tropical storms Eta and Iota. Crisis acute food insecurity is likely to persist among poor households in hurricane-affected areas of northern and southern Honduras and in parts of the Dry Corridor through September, according to FEWS NET.

COVID-19 Cases Rise Across the Region in April

El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have experienced a surge in new COVID-19 cases in recent weeks. El Salvador experienced a 31 percent increase in new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in April compared to March; however, caseloads remained below previous peaks in July–August 2020 and in December 2020–January 2021. As of May 6, there were nearly 67,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases in El Salvador, with 2,141 related deaths.

³ 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.

Confirmed new cases in Guatemala during April were double those registered during March; the World Health Organization (WHO) reported nearly 231,300 COVID-19 cases in Guatemala, with 7,642 related deaths, as of May 6.

In Honduras, new confirmed COVID-19 cases increased during each reporting week in April, with the total for the most recent week representing the highest new caseload in the country since late January; April confirmed cases were 35 percent higher than confirmed cases in March. Cortés and Francisco Morazán are the departments with the highest caseloads and related deaths, according to the Ministry of Health, with over 58,600 cases and 1,616 related deaths, and nearly 62,300 cases and 1,419 related deaths, respectively. Overall, WHO had reported more than 215,800 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Honduras as of May 6, with 5,386 related deaths.

Concurrently, the rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations has been very limited in Guatemala and Honduras. In Guatemala, just under 1 percent of the population had been vaccinated as of April 30, while in Honduras the corresponding figure was approximately 0.6 percent. Meanwhile, nearly 14 percent of El Salvador's population had received a vaccination against COVID-19 as of April 30, according to data compiled by WHO.

UNHCR Provides Legal, Protection, and Shelter Assistance in Region

In Honduras, State/PRM partner the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) supported the design of a data collection tool from January to March, to identify abandoned houses and land related to incidents of violence and internal displacement, in collaboration with the Government of Honduras National Property Institute and civil society organizations. The identified cases are being cross-referenced with the Unified System of Property Registries to help institute accountability and reparations related to housing and land rights for violence-affected internally displaced persons (IDPs) to meet ongoing humanitarian shelter needs and support sustainable housing solutions within Honduras.

Additionally, with State/PRM support, UNHCR is leading an inter-institutional government team in Panama to aid asylum seekers and refugees—including from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—in Darien Province with refugee card renewals, applications for refugee status, work and residence permits, and other legal advice. UNHCR also provided more than 7,900 asylum seekers in Mexico with emergency cash assistance to meet humanitarian needs including shelter and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).

DART Staff Conduct Monitoring Trips in Guatemala and Honduras

From April 26–30, USAID/BHA Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) staff traveled to Guatemala's Huehuetenango Department to monitor and observe BHA-funded food assistance and storm response programs in Chiantla, San Juan Ixcoy, and San Sebastián municipalities. In San Sebastián, DART staff noted that COVID-19 restrictions in the municipality were preventing events that may encourage public gatherings, requiring BHA-partner Project Concern International (PCI) to adapt ongoing distributions of cash assistance for food. In addition to ongoing food assistance, the PCI program has facilitated the establishment of 20 women's savings and loan groups; the groups are financially independent and receive technical guidance from PCI staff. Additionally, through the PCI program households can grow home vegetable gardens to increase dietary diversity and food choice.

In Chiantla and San Juan Ixcoy, PCI is implementing activities to support communities recovering from the impact of tropical storms Eta and Iota, including the provision of cash assistance to vulnerable households to purchase nutritious foods at local markets.

During the week of April 21-27, DART staff visited several partner project activities in Honduras, including in Cortés Department’s La Davis town to observe a USAID/BHA partner Catholic Relief Services (CRS) cash assistance program and in Comayagua Department’s Montañuela town to observe CRS-led repairs to a water system. Staff also travelled to Cortés Department’s Cruz de Valencia town to observe child protection programs jointly implemented by USAID/BHA partners CARE, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and the Mennonite Social Commission. DART staff also traveled to the Congrejal River basin with USAID/BHA partner GOAL to visit the NGO’s work reestablishing access to safe drinking water in several communities.

DART Team Leader Meets With Humanitarian Actors Across Region

From April 13–22, the DART team leader travelled to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to meet with UN and non-governmental organization (NGO) humanitarian partners and government representatives regarding the humanitarian situations in each country and ongoing response efforts. In El Salvador, the DART leader met with UN Resident Coordinator and WFP staff, and USAID/BHA NGO partners; additionally, the DART met with the Government of El Salvador’s Director General for Civil Protection and Minister of Agriculture and Livestock. The DART leader also travelled to Guatemala, meeting with the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), WFP Regional Director, and heads of UN agencies including the UN Resident Coordinator, as well as with USAID/BHA NGO partners and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In Honduras, the DART leader met with the UN Resident Coordinator, as well as with representatives from UNICEF and the WFP Executive Director. Additionally, the DART leader met with the Comisión Permanente de Contingencias Honduras (COPECO), the Government of Honduras’ disaster response and risk reduction agency.

KEY FIGURES



172,000

People supported monthly through USG emergency food assistance



4,500

People supported monthly with USG-funded protection activities

U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

FOOD SECURITY

To address acute food insecurity in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras that has been exacerbated by the triple shocks of reduced income associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, sequential droughts, and recent hurricane damage, USAID/BHA supports the delivery of cash assistance for food to reduce food consumption gaps, improve economic resilience, and prevent and address malnutrition among food-insecure households during the lean season, which is projected to last through August, according to FEWS NET. USAID/BHA is building upon years of strategic emergency food assistance to address increased needs within the three countries in a manner that enhances food consumption patterns and increases dietary diversity, while building resilience for vulnerable communities who rely heavily on agricultural production.

PROTECTION

With State/PRM support, UNHCR is working with the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to implement the governments’ respective commitments under the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework—known in Spanish as MIRPS—to address forced

displacement. These efforts include building government capacities to screen and process refugee claims and respond to protection concerns among IDPs and other at-risk communities. In addition, with State/PRM support UNHCR is working with the three countries on best practices for providing emergency shelter, livelihoods support, and other assistance to vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers, including survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI+) individuals, and people with disabilities. UNHCR also leads the Protection Cluster in El Salvador, providing humanitarian leadership to 28 partner organizations on a coordinated response to forced displacement in the country.

Additionally, with State/PRM funding UNHCR is working with the Government of El Salvador to train staff on how to identify persons in need and make referrals for services provided by the protection sector. State/PRM also supports UNICEF efforts throughout the region to strengthen child welfare services for displaced and unaccompanied migrant children, and the International Committee of the Red Cross in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and the region to conduct protection activities such as family reunification and tracing of missing persons.

USAID/BHA's protection partners provide psychosocial support, learning and recreational opportunities, and case management and referral services for children and women at high risk of exploitation, GBV, and other abuse. In particular, USAID/BHA partners are targeting populations in Honduras that became increasingly vulnerable to GBV and child protection concerns due to displacement and other impacts of Hurricanes Eta and Iota.



72,000
People supported
through USG
agriculture assistance

AGRICULTURE

USAID/BHA partners are supporting small-scale farmers and other agriculture-dependent households in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Humanitarian actors are providing critical agricultural assistance to farmers to ensure sufficient and timely inputs for upcoming planting seasons to mitigate declining food security in the region. Partners are working with rural households through the provision of often cost-prohibitive resources such as farming tools, fertilizer, livestock feed, poultry, seeds, and access to veterinary services.

USAID/BHA partners plan to complement the agricultural inputs by providing additional agricultural training to build resilience to future climate shocks, including through instruction on climate-smart farming practices such as drip irrigation, diversification of crops, and soil management. In Honduras, families also receive training on how to increase egg production in chickens to provide nutritious food and generate additional income. USAID/BHA-funded agricultural programming strengthens livelihood opportunities and market access for rural households and helps to improve nutritional outcomes through increased availability of nutritious local foods.



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Communities in Honduras' Dry Corridor supported with USG-funded ERMS activities

ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND MARKET SYSTEMS

Building on years of regional support, USAID/BHA partners are supporting economic recovery and market systems (ERMS) to increase financial resilience and aid vulnerable households to mitigate the impact of future shocks. Activities include establishing savings and loans groups within communities and restarting and expanding income-generating activities such as providing support to restock inventory for convenience stores and small grocery shops. Additionally in some communities, USAID/BHA partners are also holding financial literacy courses to promote savings and increased awareness of and access to financial services.

CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- Consecutive years of drought have adversely affected thousands of subsistence farmers and exacerbated food insecurity in rural communities in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, particularly in the Dry Corridor. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, poor health infrastructure, high population density, and insufficient availability of water and sanitation services have challenged efforts to control spread of the disease, while the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic exacerbated existing health, food, nutrition, and protection needs, increasing the total population requiring humanitarian assistance across El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.
- USAID/BHA's humanitarian assistance programming was halted in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras between March 2019 and May 2020. During the period of the freeze, food insecurity increased dramatically across the three countries. In June 2020, USAID/BHA began to reengage with its partners in the region and restarted support for food assistance programming to vulnerable populations in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.
- The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season was the most active season ever recorded, with 30 named storms and 13 hurricanes, including six major hurricanes, according to the UN. In particular, Tropical Storm Amanda in El Salvador in May 2020 and Hurricanes Eta and Iota in Guatemala and Honduras in November 2020 resulted in widespread destruction and large numbers of people in need, further exacerbating vulnerabilities within the region.
- On February 26, 2021, U.S. Ambassador William W. Popp issued a disaster declaration for Guatemala; on March 8, 2021, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Colleen A. Hoey issued a disaster declaration for Honduras; and on March 15, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Brendan O'Brien issued a disaster declaration in El Salvador. All three disaster declarations were issued for FY 2021 in response to severe food insecurity resulting from increased displacement due to criminal group activity, the compounding impact of natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, and recurrent drought.

USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, AND HONDURAS REGIONAL RESPONSE IN FY 2021¹

TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA , AND HONDURAS REGIONAL RESPONSE IN FY 2021¹	\$125,000,000
TOTAL STATE/PRM FUNDING FOR EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA , AND HONDURAS REGIONAL RESPONSE IN FY 2021^{1,2}	\$69,344,000
TOTAL USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, AND HONDURAS REGIONAL RESPONSE IN FYs 2017 to 2021³	\$593,126,683

¹ Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of April 26, 2021

² Vice President Harris's announcement on April 26, 2021, included a total of \$104,848,739 from State/PRM, not all of which is displayed in the above chart. It included \$25 million that was provided to State/PRM partners in prior fiscal years and is now being reallocated to address new priorities. It also included more than \$10.5 million in funding under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program in the Western Hemisphere that is not included as part of PRM's overseas assistance totals.

³ Funding figure reflects all USG humanitarian assistance funding publicly announced, committed, or obligated for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and the regional response from October 1, 2017 to April 26, 2021.

PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
 - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
 - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)