
Honduras: Nutrition Profile

Background

Honduras is a lower-middle-income country with a positive outlook for economic growth. Dependent on agricultural and manufacturing exports, Honduras was hit hard by the 2008–2009 global economic downturn and a serious political crisis that led to a temporary halt of international cash flows. The country recovered with 3.5 percent GDP growth in 2013, mainly boosted by public investments, exports and higher remittances.¹ Improved growth, however, has not translated into reductions in poverty levels; 60 percent of the population live in poverty and 36 percent in extreme poverty, with the highest burden on the rural poor and indigenous populations. Significant challenges to human development include natural disasters such as hurricanes, flooding, droughts and environmental degradation, which ruins crops and prevents access to food and other basic necessities.² Honduras has the highest homicide rate in the world, which costs an estimated 10 percent of GDP.¹ Increasing rural productivity and diversifying rural income sources will be key to progress, as most of the poor live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Despite high rates of poverty, Honduras is on track to halve extreme poverty and hunger (Millennium Development Goal 1) by 2015, but it is not on target to reduce child mortality by two-thirds (MDG 4) or to improve maternal health (MDG 5: reduce maternal mortality by 75 percent and achieve universal access to reproductive health).³

Nutrition Situation

An estimated 1.5 million Hondurans face hunger at some point each year, and regular, prolonged droughts affect the food and nutritional security of the most vulnerable populations in the southern and western regions.² At the national level, stunting has been reduced to under a quarter of children under 5, and rates of underweight and wasting are very low. In fact, Honduras now faces a double burden, with increasing overweight in young children and women. There is huge disparity in chronic undernutrition according to maternal education and wealth levels—only 11 percent of children whose mothers have secondary education are stunted, while the rate rises to 48 percent of children whose mothers had no formal education. Similarly, 8 percent of children in the highest wealth quintile are stunted, while 42 percent of children in the lowest wealth quintile are stunted.⁴ Rates of anemia have decreased in both children under 5 and women of reproductive age, and this decrease could be attributed to increases in children consuming iron-rich food. Though the nutrition situation is improving, further progress will need to address low rates of exclusive breastfeeding, poor hygiene practices and inadequate sanitation services that exacerbate disease.

Honduras Nutrition Data		
Population	7.8 Million	
Population under 5 years of age (0-59 months)	975,000	
	2006⁵	2012⁴
Prevalence of stunting among children under 5 (0-59 months)	30%	23%
Prevalence of underweight among children under 5 (0-59 months)	8%	7%
Prevalence of wasting among children under 5 (0-59 months)	1%	1%
Prevalence of anemia among children aged 6-59 months	37%	29%
Prevalence of anemia among women of reproductive age (15-49 years)	19%	15%
Prevalence of thinness among women of reproductive age (15-49 years)	4%	5%
Prevalence of children aged 0-5 months exclusively breastfed	30%	31%
Prevalence of breastfed children aged 6-23 months receiving a minimum acceptable diet	n/a	59%

National Nutrition Policies

Following the political crisis in 2009, the Government of Honduras approved a plan for social and political economic development in the Country Vision 2010-2038. Under this overarching framework, the National Health Plan 2010-2014 identifies three areas of urgent and necessary change: (1) accelerated increase in access to quality health services; (2) increased well-being and health of the majority of the population through the reduction of maternal and child mortality; and (3) modification of the structure, functioning and response of the current health system. A National Policy of Food Security and Nutrition and a National Agriculture Sector Strategy are now being implemented into municipal development plans. The government also established a national committee on food security and nutrition to serve as a mechanism to coordinate strategic priorities across relevant ministries. Also in place are the National Micronutrients Plan 2007–2011 and the National Breastfeeding and Complementary Feeding Plan of Honduras 2009–2013. Honduras has not yet joined **Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)**, a global movement that unites national leaders, civil society, bilateral and multilateral organizations, donors, businesses and researchers in a collective effort to improve nutrition.

USAID Programs: Accelerating Progress in Nutrition

Highlighted Bilateral Nutrition Projects in Honduras				
Project Name	Year Awarded	End Date	Objective(s)	Funding Stream(s)
ACCESO	March 2011	February 2015	Decrease poverty and malnutrition by 20% in six departments of Western Honduras.	Feed the Future
MERCADO	Estimated September 2014	Estimated September 2019	Decrease poverty and malnutrition by 20% in three departments of Western Honduras.	Feed the Future
Dry Corridor Alliance	January 2014	December 2018	Decrease poverty and malnutrition by 20% in three departments of Western Honduras.	Feed the Future

Feed the Future Progress

Feed the Future, the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative, focuses on interventions in targeted value chains intended to increase incomes and earning potential for households and individuals. Nutrition and health interventions are coupled with interventions in agricultural production leading to improved food security and nutritional status. The Feed the Future target regions are municipalities in six Western Highland departments, selected based on their potential to transition from subsistence farming to small-scale commercial agriculture. These areas are also characterized by high rates of chronic undernutrition (50 percent), the highest rates of female-headed households (40 percent) due to economic migration of men, and the highest concentration of indigenous (Lenca) people. Currently, the Feed the Future portfolio consists primarily of one large integrated project, ACCESO, which is supported by regional initiatives including the Promoting Food Security and Trade Integration project. Two new Feed the Future activities, Dry Corridor Alliance and MERCADO, will follow up on the interventions of ACCESO in the same zone of influence to expand and secure the results of decreasing poverty and undernutrition.

USAID/Honduras Feed the Future Targets for 2015

- Help an estimated 284,000 vulnerable Honduran women, children, and family members — mostly smallholder farmers — escape from hunger and poverty.
- Achieve improved income and nutritional status for significant numbers of additional rural populations through strategic policy engagement and institutional investments.

ACCESO, implemented by Fintrac Inc., aims to bring 30,000 rural households out of poverty (including 18,000 households out of extreme poverty), to generate \$73.95 million in net profits and to create 10,425 permanent jobs in target communities. The project provides technical assistance and capacity building in production, postharvest, management and marketing skills, and helps eliminate policy barriers to market access. These activities are combined with activities to prevent malnutrition and improve consumption behaviors. Selected value chains include coffee and high-value horticulture, selected for high income potential; corn and beans as diet staples; and livestock for income and dietary diversity. Diversified production is expected to increase access to micronutrient-dense foods, and trainings are provided in food preparation and use, balanced diets and nutrition, and basic hygiene and sanitation practices. Nutrition and production technicians and nutrition volunteers regularly visit client homes. All project staff receive training in basic health and nutrition message delivery related to household dietary diversity, child care and feeding, prevention of illness, hygiene and sanitation, and family planning practices. Nutritionists and agronomists work together to select crops for home gardens. Agronomists provide technical assistance in growing techniques while nutritionists provide information about the nutrition content of crops, conduct trainings on food preparation and preservation, and offer cooking demonstrations. Additionally, home improvements to firewood stoves, floors, walls, water sources, garbage disposals and basic home sanitation practices are expected to reduce illnesses that contribute to malnutrition.

As of FY2013, Feed the Future has completed 3,287 training events with 50,731 participants (4,409 male; 46,322 female) on improved health and nutrition practices on a wide range of topics, including feeding practices of undernourished children less than 2 years old, preparation of high-caloric foods, exclusive breastfeeding for children under 6 months, family planning, and the consumption of vitamin- and nutrient-rich foods. Almost 13,642 women participated in agricultural productivity and food security training. The project monitored approximately 4,300 children under 2 years of age in the communities with the highest malnutrition rates and provided assistance and training to their families to reduce malnutrition. Compared with the baseline, prevalence of underweight children under 2 years of age decreased by 34 percent in target communities.⁶

Promoting Food Security and Trade Integration through SPS and Other Agriculture-Related Capacity Building, implemented by USAID and USDA, is a regional agreement that plans to support Feed the Future by building government and producer capacity to enhance food security and promote regional agricultural trade among participating Central American nations. Technical assistance and capacity building will target governments and small farmers to improve productivity, market linkages, information systems and food safety compliance.

Other USAID Nutrition-Related Development Assistance

PEPFAR provides technical assistance to the Honduras Ministry of Health to improve the quality of care and treatment services, including counseling and clinical services, for people living with HIV. A number of PEPFAR-funded programs implemented by NGOs help mitigate the effects of HIV, improve health outcomes for people living with HIV, improve household nutritional status, and optimize the quality of life for adults and children living with and affected by HIV.⁷

Honduras joined the *Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed* campaign in 2012, and pledged to reduce under-5 mortality to 20 or fewer deaths per 1,000 live births by 2035 by reducing the leading preventable causes of child mortality, including undernutrition.

Honduras: Feed the Future Zones of Influence



References

1. World Bank Honduras Country Overview: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/honduras/overview>
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4. Encuesta Nacional de Demografía y Salud, 2011-2012. Honduras, Instituto Nacional de Estadística.
5. Encuesta Nacional de Demografía y Salud, 2005-2006. Honduras, Instituto Nacional de Estadística.
6. ACCESO Annual Report 2013. USAID.
7. Central America Region Operational Plan Report, 2012. PEPFAR.