

USAID'S BUREAU FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (USAID/BHA)

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA

USAID/BHA Supports LAC Communities Impacted by Hurricanes Eta and Iota

Two Category 4–5 hurricanes—Eta and Iota—passed over Central America and Colombia's Providencia, San Andrés, and Santa Catalina Archipelago within a two-week period in November, resulting in loss of life and massive destruction. Since early November, the cumulative effects of hurricanes Eta and Iota have impacted an estimated 5.2 million people, killed 189, and forced nearly 350,000 people into emergency shelters in Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, according to the UN. Additionally, in Colombia the storms affected more than 2,800 people in San Andrés and approximately 6,300 people in Providencia—the entire population of the island, the UN reports.

“To have two major hurricanes impact virtually the same locations within two weeks of each other is unprecedented,” commented USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) Team Leader Tim Callaghan. “It didn't allow time for impacted communities to recover in between storm impacts.”

As the 2020 Hurricane Season causes high levels of devastation in Central America and Colombia, USAID/BHA utilizes its unique response mechanisms to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to the most hard-hit communities throughout the region.

Before Hurricane Eta approached Central America at the beginning of November, USAID/BHA began preparing for a large-scale response. This involved reviewing emergency relief stockpiles, pre-positioning staff, and activating local disaster experts throughout the region to track the storm and remain in close communication with national response officials.

Immediately following Hurricane Eta's landfall over Central America on November 3, USAID/BHA staff began coordinating response activities with national authorities and humanitarian partners. Following Iota's impact on November 17, USAID activated a DART to lead the U.S. Government's (USG) response efforts. This team comprises 40 people in seven countries who are coordinating with local authorities, U.S. embassies, and humanitarian partners to assess damage, identify priority needs, and provide lifesaving aid.



USAID/BHA, through WV, delivered blankets, hygiene kits, and kitchen sets to households in emergency shelters throughout Honduras. Photo courtesy of Carlos Velasquez, USAID/BHA



In November, two Category 4-5 hurricanes made landfall in Nicaragua's North Caribbean Autonomous Region within a two-week period, causing widespread damage. Photo courtesy of CRS

Between November 5 and 8, the USG declared disasters in Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua due to the effects of the Eta storm system, and on November 17, the USG declared a disaster in Colombia due to the effects of Hurricane Iota on Providencia, San Andrés, and Santa Catalina islands. In response, USAID/BHA has provided \$10.32 million to humanitarian agencies to deliver assistance to populations in need—including nearly \$624,000 in Colombia, \$600,000 in Guatemala, \$8.96 million in Honduras, and \$100,000 in Nicaragua, as of November 27.

With USAID/BHA funding, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) will support 200 displaced households in Alta Verapaz Department, Guatemala with food assistance, household items, and hygiene kits. USAID/BHA partner Save the Children has also pivoted existing programming to provide emergency food assistance and cash transfers to nearly 620 households in collective shelters.

In Honduras, with USAID/BHA funding, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency International and World Vision (WV) are procuring blankets, hygiene items, and kitchen sets to distribute to individuals residing in collective shelters. The UN World Food Program is delivering emergency food assistance to an initial 20,000 households, while several partners, including the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), Global Communities, GOAL, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) are providing water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) support to people in shelters and affected communities. To meet immediate health needs, IFRC is also providing health services, including first aid, psychosocial support, and support to improve community-based surveillance for diseases. UNICEF is also providing services to prevent gender-based violence and children abuse, among other protection needs. In addition, USAID/BHA partner Global Communities is undertaking COVID-19 mitigation interventions in 59 shelters across Cortés Department. USAID/BHA partner GOAL is also providing technical assistance in emergency shelter management, as well as support for shelter repair.

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USAID/BHA is supporting UNICEF in Nicaragua to provide emergency WASH services to approximately 13,500 people—including nearly 6,100 children—in heavily affected areas of the North Caribbean Autonomous Region and Jinotega and Nueva Segovia departments.

USAID/BHA supported the delivery of approximately 100 metric tons (MT) of urgently needed Government of Colombia (GoC) relief supplies, including communications equipment, generators, food, medical supplies, and potable water, from Colombia's capital city of Bogotá to San Andrés Island. In addition, USAID/BHA has established a humanitarian air bridge between San Andrés and Providencia islands, through which a commercial airline is transporting emergency relief supplies.

To help deliver humanitarian assistance to hard-to-reach areas in Guatemala and Honduras, USAID has also requested the unique capabilities of the U.S. Department of Defense. The U.S. Southern Command's Joint Task Force-Bravo flew 24 missions, rescuing 187 people from isolated areas in Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama, between November 6 and 13. DoD has also transported more than 60 MT of food, water, hygiene kits, and other relief supplies to communities hit by the recent storms. USAID is also supporting the Americas Support Team—comprising five members from Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department—to help with emergency management and coordination efforts in Honduras. The team arrived on November 19 and is providing technical support as part of the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team.

As of November 27, the USG had provided nearly \$15.5 million in funding for the Latin America storms response. The USAID DART, in coordination with government authorities continues to work with relief actors to determine additional humanitarian needs and develop a comprehensive response.



USAID/BHA delivered tool kits—including hammers, nails, handsaws, and screwdrivers—and metal ties to support roof restoration efforts in San Andres, Colombia. Photo courtesy of Wilfredo Ospina, USAID/BHA

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USAID/BHA experts assisted GoH response authorities on the implementation of the ICS to support enhanced rescue efforts in hard-hit areas such as La Lima Municipality in Cortes Department. Photo courtesy of Carlos Velasquez, USAID/BHA

USAID/BHA Local Experts Help Bolster Honduras' Response to Eta and Iota Storms

Before Hurricane Eta's landfall, USAID/BHA deployed a team of Honduras-based disaster experts to provide technical support to Government of Honduras (GoH) National Emergency Commission (COPECO) in geographic areas that the storm was expected to impact.

USAID/BHA's consultants supported COPECO with critical response activities, including interagency coordination, logistical support, and technical guidance on information management and analysis, shelter management, on-site operations center management, and response planning.

In hard-hit areas such as La Lima Municipality in Cortés Department, USAID/BHA experts guided GoH response authorities on the implementation of the Incident Command System (ICS) to support enhanced rescue efforts. In addition, the USAID/BHA team helped COPECO design an information collection tool for shelters with a COVID-19 variable and enhance information management and analysis methodologies that have led to changes in the executive reports. A USAID/BHA geographic information systems expert has also been supporting

COPECO with the generation of maps that identify priority areas for humanitarian assistance, which are key for planning and coordinating effective response operations.

USAID/BHA-trained local disaster management specialists are familiar with the local context and can be activated as required to liaise with the host government's emergency response authorities, assist with preparedness efforts and ground-truth disaster reports, and help partners to implement response activities more efficiently.



Before Hurricane Eta's landfall, USAID/BHA activated a team of local disaster experts to support the GoH response authorities, assess damage and needs, and coordinate UGS's response efforts in Honduras. Photo courtesy of Carlos Velasquez, USAID/BHA