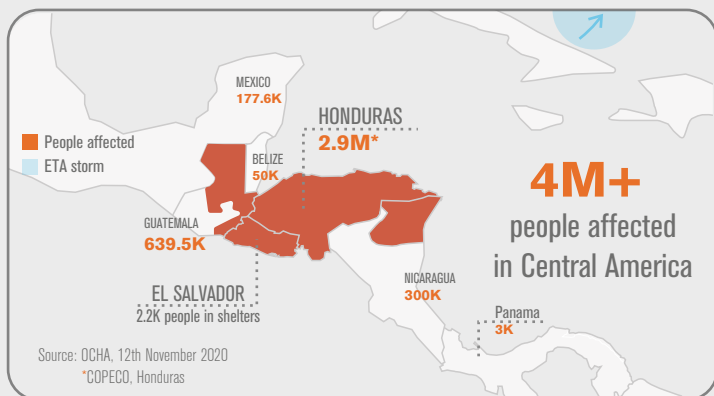
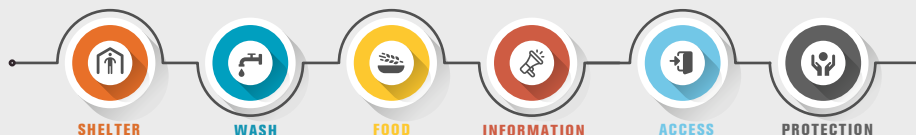


Tropical Storm ETA: Emergency in Central America

NRC NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL



A new crisis added to an existing one

Tropical storm Eta is currently across the north-west of Cuba, causing rains, and is moving in the direction of the United States' southern coastlines. Cuba does not report any major impacts. **An exact death count is not yet available, however, some figures estimate over 100 deaths. According to official sources, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua are the most affected countries so far, with more than 4M people impacted by the storm (2.9M reported just in Honduras).**

Storm Eta has destroyed houses, harvests and increased existing food insecurity, as well as exacerbated needs for protection, shelter, health and WASH services. In this year, before the pandemic, the Humanitarian Needs Overview for the North of Central America showed that 5.2 million people needed humanitarian assistance due to violence, displacement, food insecurity, and climate impacts. Additionally and according to the United Nations, 8 million people would have required assistance in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala as a result of the pandemic. The number of people with humanitarian needs will increase dramatically as a result of storm Eta.

Humanitarian actors are working to provide COVID-19 protective equipment, soap, clean water, and antibacterial gel, as well as basic hygiene supplies to those displaced. Social distancing and preventative measures are being encouraged in shelters.

Assistance is needed in

Economists believe the loss could be even greater than that inflicted in 1998 by [Hurricane Mitch](#), the most destructive storm to ever hit Central America and the second most deadly Atlantic hurricane in recorded history. However, the effects of the pandemic will make rebuilding this time around even harder.

“We lost everything. We live in an informal settlement and it is terrible for us all. We don't have food and we need any kind of support.”

As told by Lesbia Suazo, Honduran woman affected by Eta storm in Yoro.



Spotlight on Honduras

- The country reports **2.9 million people affected**.
- More than **95,000 people without communication services** in 68 communities.
- **43,900 people sheltered**.
- **348 shelters available**. COVID-19 and gastrointestinal illnesses outbreaks were reported within shelters.
- **2,700 houses** damaged or affected.
- NRC has identified **access restrictions due to presence** of gang members controlling communities in San Pedro Sula.
- NRC is concerned about the **protection risks inside the shelters**: overcrowding is on the rise and gender based violence cases have been reported.



Improvised shelter in school facility, Honduras.
Photo: NRC / Justo Martínez. November 11th 2020.

- According to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), teams on the ground indicate **critical needs in Shelter, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Health, Food Security and Protection.**
- The Honduran government has called for aid from the international community, **while its own response to Tropical Storm Eta has been slow and insufficient.** NRC staff in San Pedro Sula (Honduras) were strongly criticized by the local population for the lack of humanitarian response, after confusing the organization's staff with government personnel.
- The U.N. OCHA estimates that nearly 40,000 people in Honduras are currently in shelters, with **some 745 communities across 155 municipalities reporting damage.**
- The U.N. OCHA **is also concerned about how and if people can return to their homes.** It will take time for the land to completely dry out as waters recede, and because of the high poverty rate, people don't have the means to plant again this fall if their crops have been destroyed.

- NRC is available to support donor missions or provide more specific information on the needs of affected people.



NRC conducting a needs assessment in Honduras (Centro de Educación Basica Castro Lopez)
Photo: NRC / Justo Martínez. November 11th 2020.

NRC RESPONSE

- NRC teams are assessing the situation and have started to provide humanitarian assistance in Honduras.
- We delivered 500 hygiene kits for sheltered people in three schools in San Pedro Sula to prevent the spread of COVID-19. 1,000 additional kits will be delivered in the next few days.
- We are actively participating in coordination mechanisms at the regional and local levels. NRC is part of the team that is currently carrying out the Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA). findings will be shared after Friday, November 13.
- NRC is contacting donors to inform them about the situation and request possible reprogramming for the emergency response.
- NRC is providing humanitarian aid thanks to the support from the Norwegian MFA and ECHO.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Additional funding is urgently needed to effectively address the humanitarian needs, especially in Honduras.
- The ongoing existing humanitarian crisis due to extreme violence has been worsened by the pandemic and now by Tropical Storm Eta. Several of the factors forcing displacement in recent years are now arguably worse than ever. Stronger and more effective coordination is needed. OCHA should lead a humanitarian response plan for the region.
- The current situation directly affects the response and the delivery of humanitarian aid. Adherence to the humanitarian principles must be a priority when delivering humanitarian aid.
- Protection must come first. In Honduras, NRC has had to evacuate people from emergency shelters, due to them sharing the space with members of criminal gangs.
- Activate the Education Cluster, as it is clear that children and schooling have been severely affected, however there is lack of information and leadership in this sector.