



Reporting Period: 14th November to 4th December 2024

HONDURAS

SitRep No. 2

Tropical Storm Sara



Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs


During November 2024, Tropical Storm (TS) Sara entered the northern part of Honduras, leaving a considerable negative impact throughout its course along 32% of the national territory, mostly in the departments of Atlántida, Cortés, Yoro, Colón, Choluteca, Valle, and Francisco Morazán. The magnitude of the storm resulted in the Declaration of a National Emergency for a period of 30 days, with special emphasis on 98 municipalities classified by the Secretariat for Risk Management and National Contingencies (COPECO) as the most vulnerable and affected. During the first week of the emergency, COPECO reported over 259,520 people affected (113,067 children), including 8,927 people distributed along 116 shelters, 7 people dead, over 2,492 communities isolated due to damages to access routes, and over 286,200 people with no access to water and sanitation systems. Few days after the storm, families sheltered in most affected areas started a rapid return to their communities motivated by the fear of losing their possessions, house invasions and the difficult conditions of shelters. This increased vulnerability of families, especially children and women, who returned to communities that continued to be flooded, with no access to safe water, sanitation systems damaged and high risks of landslides. Moreover, the following weeks two cold fronts brought more rainfalls which increased floodings and forced many to return to the shelters. Under this context, risks and vulnerabilities of affected population increased significantly, and humanitarian needs were exacerbated due to high levels of stagnant water, deepen damages to already-affected infrastructure, and overcrowding of shelters which activated and de-activated several times.

Rapid changes in context due to prolonged rains, the slow recovery of roads infrastructure, continuous flooding, high level stagnant water and mud, damages to water and sanitation systems, and limited access to affected communities -especially those in most violent contexts- have made humanitarian access more difficult and the cost of the response more expensive. This situation exacerbates the risks of survival and development of children and women, who are critically exposed to violence including SGBV, malnutrition and the spread of water-related diseases including dengue, diarrhoea, amebiasis, among others.

Thus, UNICEF highlights the importance of taking urgent steps towards the recovery of water and sanitation systems, drainage of stagnant water, recovery of affected schools, prevention and control of illnesses and malnutrition, and strengthening of child protection systems for a safe return of children and families to the communities.

Situation in Numbers

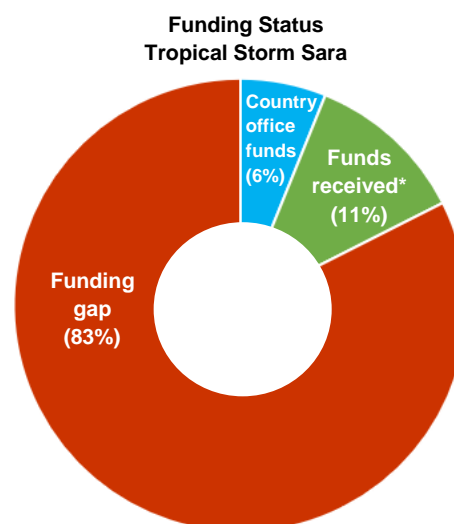
 **113,067 children** affected.

 **7 municipalities** continue to report stagnant flooding and high levels of mud.

 **286,200 people** at risk of waterborne diseases.

 **6,000 people** Reached with UNICEF multisectoral responses.

UNICEF Appeal US \$3.5 million



*Funds received for emergency response to TS Sara from different donors including ECHO and UNICEF HQ.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

The National Service for Water and Sanitation Systems (SANAA) has completed a detailed nationwide analysis on 104 affected water supply systems in the most impacted departments, except for Cortés where damage mapping is still pending. During this analysis, a variety of damages that compromise regular supply of drinking water for over 280,000 people in 34 municipalities have been identified, including collapsed pipes, damage to transmission lines and breakdowns of storage systems. According to SANAA's initial reports, Atlántida is the department with most damages registered to water systems, affecting both rural and urban areas, and exacerbating the vulnerability of affected populations.



For instance, in the municipality of La Ceiba alone, about 78,000 people in the urban area and 20,000 people in the rural area have been left without access to water supply, mainly due to collapsed pipes and broken and defective water collection systems. Likewise, in the municipality of El Progreso in Yoro Department, water supply systems face similar conditions, affecting over 20,000 people in urban-overpopulated areas. In addition, COPECO has confirmed that at least 218 sanitation systems serving more than 330,000 people have been damaged, increasing risks for affected communities to water borne diseases such as diarrheal and dengue.

Moreover, people remaining in few active shelters continue to face significant challenges that endanger their health and survival. According to reports, shelters do not have the adequate conditions to meet minimum hygiene standards including separate toilets, waste management systems and availability of hygiene kits, which aggravates health conditions of sheltered population, especially among children, women and the elderly.

Despite response efforts, significant gaps remain. Available resources are insufficient to repair and restore WASH systems with climate-resilient approaches, especially in communities with limited access due to damages in road infrastructure. While distribution of critical supplies to promote safe water treatment and rehabilitation of critical infrastructure are urgent, limited access to isolated communities delays aid distribution and increases costs of assistance. Therefore, it is critical to prioritize interventions in most affected areas such as Atlántida, Yoro and Cortés, ensuring a coordinated response that not only addresses immediate needs, but also fosters sustainability and preparedness for future climate-related emergencies.

Child Protection

Tropical storm Sara has caused havoc in communities, seriously affecting protection systems, mainly for children and women, who have faced great challenges in returning to their communities and homes, due to the loss of many of their livelihoods, which has generated increased levels of stress, health problems, creating a rise in vulnerability, violence and child abuse. Communities have adopted various mechanisms to cope with adversity. Those with better community support networks have shown greater resilience, advancing in their reincorporation and recovery process. However, in other communities, many families have not yet been able to return to their homes or even minimally reestablish their livelihoods. The lack of community support networks and response by local and central governments have left these communities in a situation of greater vulnerability, forcing them to seek individual solutions to face some of the challenges they were already facing, and the new ones generated by this climate phenomenon.

Therefore, it is important to strengthen coping mechanisms in the communities and it is crucial to continue prioritizing the protection and well-being of children. Response actions, both in the short and medium term, should focus on



strengthening psycho-emotional support through group therapy and specialized care for critical cases. The identification and referral of cases of abuse, exploitation or violence must also be ensured, in addition to guaranteeing access to essential basic services. It is also important to continue strengthening coordination mechanisms with the Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and Family (SENAF), the Public Prosecutor's Office, Municipal Councils for the Protection of Children, Municipal Offices for Children and other local organizations located in the communities.

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Nutrition

The loss of livelihoods and the negative impact on food security caused by TS Sara has increased the risk of malnutrition in children, especially children under 5 years (Cu5), and Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW). Moreover, communities still face significant challenges to meet most urgent needs, including access to drinking water and health services because of damages to health infrastructure and water and sanitation systems caused by TS Sara and the 2 cold fronts. This situation combined with the upcoming onset of seasonal hunger highlight the importance of taking urgent measures to prevent risks of malnutrition in Cu5 and PLW, especially in the southern part of the country where acute malnutrition rates before TS Sara were above 2.1%.



Education

At the time of the arrival of TS Sara, the school year was ending in Honduras, Ministry of Education (MoE) suspended activities in the most affected departments. Students who still had pending processes to close the school year will resume them in the second half of January 2025. However, according to MoE more than 42,200 children and adolescents are reported to be affected by TS Sara and will be in need of basic supplies to be reintegrated into the educational system, including school kits, textbooks and teaching materials. Moreover, official reports show that 206 schools -Atlántida (142), Colón (48.), Cortés (7) y Yoro (3)- have been damaged and in need of infrastructure repairs. Additionally, with the objective of reducing the impact of the emergency and the risk of school dropout, post-emergency actions to promote children's access to education will be needed, including promotion of scholarships and school meals.

Despite UNICEF and Education Cluster to advocate that schools were not used as shelters and that additional alternatives were sought, such as community centres, churches, and alternative centres, 66% of the shelters were activated in schools. As per previous experiences, UNICEF and MoE estimate schools used as shelters will need repairs and cleaning to promote a dignified return of children and adolescents to classes. In this perspective, UNICEF has already provided hygiene kits to schools affected by TT Sara and supported the creation of exit plans for those schools that have functioned as shelters during the emergency.

Health

In the second week following Tropical Storm Sara, the health situation in Honduras remains critical. The Ministry of Health (MoH) reports that access to essential health services continues to be disrupted in many affected areas, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach communities, where damaged infrastructure and/or blocked roads have affected access to health services in 69 health centers, mainly in the department of Atlántida, Colón and Gracias a Dios. The number of reported cases of diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory infections (ARIs) is being analysed by the MoH, who are currently comparing epidemiological weeks to understand potential increases in diseases, particularly among children under 5, pregnant women, and the elderly, which are expected due to the limited access of safe water, hygiene facilities and overcrowded shelters. Preliminary data indicate that in the region of Atlántida, there has been an increase of 53% of diarrheal cases in children under 5 in comparison to weeks prior to the tropical storm, whereas in Cortés there is an increase of 7% when comparing weeks prior to the tropical storm. Immediate support is needed to restore and strengthen health service delivery, ensure the continuity of maternal and child health care, and implement robust disease surveillance systems to prevent potential outbreaks in the most affected departments.

Security and Access

Access to isolated communities is being progressively restored. However, some of the solutions implemented to restore access to communities are temporary. It is expected final repairs to permanent infrastructure, such roads and bridges, take several months, which continues to limit access to most affected communities. Moreover, the security situation continues to pose a significant access risk, especially in communities with great presence of gangs, especially municipalities such San Pedro Sula, La Lima and El Progreso. In addition, the lack of access to clean water forces the population to rely on unsafe sources,



such as rivers and streams, which poses a particular threat to women and girls in the communities, who in some cases walk alone to collect water and expose them to armed violence and SGBV.

Humanitarian Response

Through its rapid humanitarian action, UNICEF has been able to reach over 6,000 affected people with multisectoral services in over 14 priority communities in La Ceiba, Arizona and Esparta in Atlántida, El Progreso in Yoro, San Pedro Sula in Cortés, and Tegucigalpa in Francisco Morazán department. Humanitarian response has been focused in responding to most critical needs of children and families in WASH, Child Protection and Nutrition to mitigate the negative impact of TS Sara and increase affected communities' access to basic and dignified services. This response has been achieved thanks to the strengthening of partnerships and coordination efforts in the field with key actors including Save the Children, ADRA, SANAA, COPECO, Municipal Children's Rights Offices, the Secretariat of Childhood, Adolescence and Family (SENAF), and other relevant municipal authorities,

Since the onset of the emergency, UNICEF started the delivery of essential hygiene items, water treatment supplies (water purification tablets and filters) and water safe containers for the most vulnerable families with children under 5 years of age, headed by single mothers and hosted at shelters, along risk communication messages on healthy wash habits. As shelters progressively close,

UNICEF is monitoring displaced families to ensure WASH humanitarian assistance continues to be delivered at households that still face constraints for safe access to water. However, rainfall from two cold fronts continues to impact the already water stressed soil, increasing contamination of water sources, which will lead to severe affectations from waterborne diseases. Therefore, in close technical coordination with SANAA and COPECO, UNICEF is strongly advocating for political and financial attention to reestablish water supply services under 'build back better' principles to promote climate resilient systems restoration.



In addition, through the activation of Child Friendly Spaces in shelters and affected communities more than 408 children and 314 caregivers have received psycho-emotional support, which has been vital for their recovery from trauma and to strengthen their resilience. In addition, actions have been implemented to identify and refer cases to specialized protection services, through case management from the community level prioritizing immediate recovery through MHPSS and coordinating other actions with SENAF. also ensure a safe and dignified return to their communities. These interventions seek not only to address immediate needs, but also to protect the dignity and fundamental rights of children during this emergency.

Finally, UNICEF and its partners coordinated nutritional and health interventions with primary health care networks to promote health brigades in shelters and affected communities, reaching about 2.058 people. Out of people reached,



226 Cu5 (121 girls; 105 boys) were assisted and evaluated detect acute malnutrition in a timely manner, and 189 children between 5 and 17 years (100 girls; 89 boys) were supported with nutritional and primary health services. Additionally, 294 PLW were sensitized on the importance of breastfeeding and nutritional feeding in emergency situations and 172 male caregivers received sensitization on infant and young child feeding. During these brigades, 13 children under 5 (7 girls; 6 boys) were identified with moderate acute malnutrition and were provided with therapeutic treatment and medical evaluation in coordination with medical teams from the Ministry of Health.

Humanitarian Coordination

UNICEF continues providing technical support and leading coordination efforts through WASH and Education Clusters, Nutrition Working Group and Child Protección Area of Responsibility to promote effective life-saving interventions in response to TS Sara.

In this sense, UNICEF-led clusters have developed a series of field mission to Cortes, Atlántida, Yoro and Choluteca departments to analyze impact, needs and response gaps originated by the impact of the TS Sara. For instance, WASH

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cluster has developed meetings with WASH organizations, COPECO and SANAA to promote an evidence-based response and advocate for urgent to promote safe access to water and climate-resilient solutions. WASH cluster coordination and leadership has resulted in the strengthening of technical support of and complementarity with governmental authorities, including joint analysis on damages to water and sanitation systems and integrated gap analysis in 34 affected municipalities.

Additionally, given the number of reports on powdered milk donations to shelters and affected communities, the Nutrition Working Group reinforced with humanitarian, civil society and governmental counterparts the “*National declaration on infant and young child feeding during emergencies in Honduras*”, including the National Commission on Breastfeeding, Academia, Secretariat of Social Development and MoH. Through this joint declaration, Nutrition Actors aim to promote the protection of infants and young children during the emergency and to contribute to the reduction of the aggressive donation of breast milk substitutes, which threaten the life of infants under 6 months of age. At the same time, 200 PWL and primary caregivers participated in breastfeeding promotion circles in shelters, where sessions on the importance of breastfeeding and nutrition of children.

Finally, through the Child Protection Accountability Area (CPAoR) inter-institutional coordination has been strengthened with SENAF, municipal offices of Child Protection, CODEMs and CODELs to reinforce collective approached on psycho-emotional support, awareness-raising on prevention and reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) and specialized monitoring of child protection cases. Additionally, through the CPAoR, protection and dignity kits have been distributed in coordination with child-protection authorities in most affected communities to promote emotional recovery and protection of children and caregivers.

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