Highlights

- Eta started as depression Twenty-Nine and rapidly intensified and became Category-4 Hurricane on 2 November. On the morning of 3 November, Eta made landfall on the northern Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, with 240 km/h winds. The storm continued moving slowly inland over Nicaragua and weakened to a Tropical Storm on early 4 November. On the night of 4 November, Eta was leaving Nicaraguan territory entering Honduras.
- While assessments are ongoing, mainly in Nicaragua and Honduras, Eta effects are expected to be devastating, especially in already vulnerable remote communities, and in locations suffering the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.
- According to initial reports, around 1.7 million people have been affected in Honduras and Guatemala, including around 637,000 children. In Nicaragua, approximately 150,000 people could have been impacted in the five most affected municipalities of the Caribbean coast (approx. 60,000 children).
- Damages have been reported in infrastructure in the areas directly hit by the storm. The impacts are expected to be of a larger scale due to the floods, consequence of heavy rains and the waterlogged soils, across several countries in Central America.
- In countries in Eta’s path, UNICEF Country Offices (COs) have pre-positioned supplies and capacity for immediate response. Nevertheless, additional resources, including funding, staff and supplies will be required to scale up the response in view of the actual impact and the governments’ response capacity. COs are currently preparing preliminary response plans and budgets, which are being revised as new information on the impact and needs is available.

Tropical Storm ETA
Overall situation: Track, Wind buffers

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Reporting Period: 2 – 6 November 2020

Central America
Tropical Storm Eta
Humanitarian
Situation Report No. 1

Situation in Numbers

- **1.6 million**
  People affected in Honduras
  (COPECO, 6 Nov)
  **Incl. approx. 605,000 children**

- **Over 81,000**
  People affected in Guatemala
  (CONRED, 5 Nov)
  **Incl. approx. 32,000 children**

- **Approx. 150,000**
  People could have been impacted in the 5 most affected municipalities in Nicaragua
  (Based on ADAM-WFP estim.)
  **Incl. approx. 60,000 children**

- **1,786**
  People in shelters in El Salvador
  (Gov. of El Salvador, 6 Nov).

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(Total: 63-92 km/h, Orange: 93-118 km/h, Red: >118 km/h). Source: GDACS.
Tropical depression Twenty-Nine, while approaching the coasts of Central America, rapidly intensified and became Category-4 Hurricane Eta on 2 November. On the morning of 3 November, Eta made landfall south of Puerto Cabezas (Bilwi) on the northern Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, with 240 km/h winds. The storm continued moving slowly inland over Nicaragua and weakened to a Tropical Storm on early 4 November.

On the night of 4 November, Eta was leaving Nicaraguan territory and entering Honduras. According to the National Hurricane Center / Central Pacific Hurricane Center (NOAA), the centre of Eta is expected to move across the north-western Caribbean Sea on 6 November, approach the Cayman Islands on 7 November, and be near central or western Cuba on 7 and 8 November. Flash and river flooding are also possible in parts of Jamaica and Mexico.

In Nicaragua, on 2 November, the national government decreed a red alert for the Autonomous Region of the North Caribbean, yellow alert for the departments of Jinotega, Nueva Segovia and Chinandega. The green alert is maintained for the rest of the country. The scale of the impact and needs in Nicaragua are yet to be determined, as damage assessments are ongoing in the affected areas. Around 150,000 people (30,000 families) could have been impacted in the five most affected municipalities in the Caribbean coast where most of the population are indigenous from Miskitos and Mayagnas ethnicities. Initial reports indicate that at least 32,000 families have been affected by partial disruption of water supply, mainly due to turbidity of water sources. Around 13,000 people have been evacuated to 82 shelters, including in 41 education centres that are being used as shelters – as reported by the ministry of education (MoE). Some families are already returning to their homes; therefore, the number of people remaining in shelters is decreasing. According to reports by the MoE, classes have been suspended in 2,110 schools in the affected area, while damages have been reported in 43 schools and two MoE buildings. Authorities deployed 11 teams to rehabilitate the affected institutions. Some roads, telecommunications and electrical networks have been affected and are being gradually restored. Among the affected areas, are very remote indigenous communities where physical access and language barriers could challenge the relief efforts. There is significant concern that Eta’s impact in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) conditions as well as rapid evacuations and sheltering conditions might trigger a significant increase in COVID-19 cases.

On 4 November, the Government of Honduras decreed red alert for the entire country, mandating compulsory evacuations in high-risk areas and forecasting up to 200 mm of rainfall in the mountainous zones. As of early 6 November, official sources report eight people death, two missing persons, 147,361 families affected, 1,639,390 people affected, 707 families evacuated (3,301 people), 1,521 families in temporary shelters (7,194 people) and 201 persons rescued. Media reports that densely populated slums in the cities of San Pedro Sula and Choloma (Cortés department) are flooded, and evacuations have started where possible, as some families are stranded in rooftops and waiting for rescue. Further complicating the situation, Honduras is heavily affected by COVID-19 and its socio-economic impacts. This poses an additional challenge for humanitarian response, hence the need to continue supporting provision of personal protective equipment for people in the temporary shelters being set up across the country, where the risk of COVID-19 spread will be much higher due to crowding in confined spaces, as well as for frontline workers. Communities impacted by the storm will also be in need of support as the situation evolves. On 5 November, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Honduras made a call for international humanitarian assistance and financial resources in order to address urgent and recovery needs.

In El Salvador, a country-wide red alert has been decreed. Hurricane Eta has caused moderate winds over the country, occasionally strong, with a tendency to decrease. Rains and showers continue scattered throughout the country, with greater emphasis to the north and in the eastern coastal zone. Rains are expected to increase in the following hours, increasing the risks of flooding and landslides. Authorities have warned about the high risks of landslides due to waterlogged soils and are focused on preparedness, ready to open 1,152 shelters across the country (with capacity to host around 30,000 people) if needed. The national government reports 90 related events, one death and 1,786 people in 44 activated shelters. The prevention of COVID-19 transmission in shelters is a major concern. As schools in El Salvador remain closed due to COVID-19, the MoE is assessing the educational facilities that could be used as shelters, to ensure compliance with the minimum requirements to guarantee the security of affected people. The MoE has suspended virtual classes and will focus on three priorities: Provision of psychosocial support, food assistance, dissemination of critical messages on prevention and mental health, throughout the official education channels.

In Guatemala, a state of calamity was declared on 5 November in nine departments: Izabal, Petén, Alta Verapaz, El Quiche, Chiquimula, El Progreso, Santa Rosa, Jutiapa and Zacapa. The tropical depression Eta is generating abundant humidity in the country. Moderate to heavy rains and temporary drizzles are expected. The departments most affected are Izabal, Petén, Alta Verapaz and El Quiché. According to data from the National Coordinating Office for Disaster Reduction (CONRED), there have been 165 incidents, eight people death, 18 missing persons, 81,316 people affected...

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2 According to estimations by WFP-ADAM.
4 Reported by Ministry of Family.
6 COPECO Honduras, Reporte No. 13, 6 November 2020, 12:00h.
8 CONRED, ‘Consolidado de incidentes Fenómeno Tropical Eta’, 6 November 2020, 10.00h.
3,389 evacuated, 4,754 people have received assistance, and 943 houses have been damaged. CONRED has deployed immediate reaction teams and sent convoys of trucks with supplies (food assistance, water, hygiene and cleaning kits) to the affected areas. In total, 59 temporary shelters had been activated, hosting 4,087 people in Izabal, Alta Verapaz, Petén and El Quiché departments.

In Belize, major flooding is affecting most of the country. A flood warning is in effect for Cayo, Belize, Stann Creek and Toledo districts. Most rivers in the country are rising. Floods are expected to affect farming areas where communities have been alerted and part of them have been evacuated (approx. 800 families have been requested to seek shelter on higher ground), as per National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) reports. According to preliminary estimations by NEMO, around 3,500 people could be affected, including approximately 1,500 people in the South, and 2,000 people in the West. Of particular concern is the overlapping of the at-risk communities with some of the current COVID-19 hotspots in the country. Moreover, extremely vulnerable families, already affected by the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, are risking considerable loss of livelihoods. In terms of education, the MoE declared the rest of the week “Non-school days” due to weather conditions, teachers were advised to work from home.

Other countries in Central America have received the indirect impacts of Eta. In Costa Rica, red alert has been declared in eight municipalities. At least 458 related incidents have been reported including localized floods, and landslides and critical damage to roads and bridges mostly in the southern and northern pacific areas. Approximately 1,580 vulnerable people have been relocated to 44 shelters. The management of a potential surge in the number of people in shelters will be challenging given the COVID-19 context. Authorities and international organizations are monitoring the situation and will activate support in case of gaps. In Panama, a yellow alert was declared for Chiriquí province due to heavy rains and floods, but damages have been reported in five more provinces. At least 300 families have been affected and 698 people have been evacuated to 12 shelters. There are 200 people waiting to be rescued due to the inaccessibility of the roads. Furthermore, there are reports of five people dead, including two children, and two missing persons. Local and national authorities are conducting rescue operations and responding to the emergency.

COVID-19 transmission and outbreaks of other diseases are a major concern across all countries already affected or exposed to the impact of Eta. Given the potential overcrowding of shelters; lack of adequate safety protocols; the precarious living conditions in some of the communities at risk; and the potential lack of sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) items, access to safe water and hygiene supplies for affected population and frontline workers; there needs to be a special focus should be on preventive measures and biosafety protocols. Eta is impacting women, girls, men and boys differently, with the level of vulnerability and gender equality being key determinants of which groups are worse affected. Moreover, some of the communities at risk and some already affected are very vulnerable, and have been struck by the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, the current situation could be devastating for the well-being of thousands of families and children.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

NICARAGUA

WASH

UNICEF has prepositioned WASH supplies to reach around 15,000 people, including 6,000 children. These items include: 3,000 family hygiene kits; 3,000 water containers (16 litres); 9 water tanks with capacity for 5,000 litres each, 1,500 individual hygiene kits; 12 boxes of water disinfection tablets to treat approximately 3,400 m3 of water and 50 chlorine test kits for water quality monitoring capable to make 12,000 tests; 4 kits for testing arsenic in water, two diesel pumping kits. The available supplies are on standby for delivery to the Ministry of Health and the National System for Prevention, Mitigation and Attention to Disasters (SINAPRED). In addition, at least 85,000 people can be reached with communication materials available. UNICEF is also working with the Regional WASH LAC Group on planning for WASH Sector Response, and rapid WASH assessments and mapping.

Education

UNICEF is revising its supply plan in order to locally procure education, cleaning supplies and recreation kits. School tents are being prepositioned from the Region.

Child Protection

Family and PPE kits are being locally prepositioned, to address needs of people in shelters.

Communication for Development (C4D)

The CO has designed a Communication for Development plan to respond to the information needs and has developed a media plan to position UNICEF’s response to the hurricane, at national and international level and to keep the media permanently informed through press releases and digital content.

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11 Kits include bar soaps, cloths, sanitary pads, detergent, gel alcohol, paper towels.
12 Kits include liquid alcohol, liquid soap, gel alcohol.
Since the start of the hurricane threat, the CO has disseminated messages focused on encouraging families to implement the protection measures indicated by the official institutions, reaching 34,000 people directly so far. New communication messages on WASH, health, child protection and education are being developed, in the context of the situation that families are facing in the aftermath of the hurricane. These will be disseminated through radio and other traditional media, to reach out the most affected communities.

HONDURAS
WASH
UNICEF stands ready to activate agreements with WASH partners for the procurement of emergency WASH kits and services, and monitoring of conditions of access to water, sanitation and hygiene in temporary shelters, including prevention of COVID-19. Preliminary response actions include monitoring the impacts of the storm in the WASH sector. A joint Programme document for Protection and WASH Humanitarian response in temporary shelters is being set up after reallocating own resources, which could be extended upon increased funds availability.

Through the WASH cluster, led by UNICEF, partners stand ready for the delivery of WASH kits, and are delivering key lifesaving WASH messages through social media. Also, the core commitments for children (CCCs) and standard activities previously identified through the WASH cluster, are being disseminated among partners and members of the WASH cluster to support sectoral response quality. Coordination with the Regional WASH LAC Group is ongoing to support with planning, assessment, mapping and response monitoring.

Education
A total of 490 educational kits for children are currently pre-positioned with partners, available to be distributed. Through active agreements, additional kits could be delivered in the most affected communities, according to the dimension of impact.

Child Protection
UNICEF will provide immediate support for the set up of three emergency shelters in the hard-hit coastal city of Puerto Cortés, which will provide temporary shelter for 400 girls, boys and families. Other emergency requests from hard-hit coastal towns are being considered for rapid support, mostly linked with rapid activation of temporary shelters. Support will include, depending on needs assessments and available funding, procuring humanitarian supplies, setting-up separate dormitories and restrooms for men, women and children, ensuring 24/7 supervision by qualified staff, messaging on Violence Against Children (VAC) and Gender-based Violence (GBV) prevention, information on protective services, setting up child-friendly spaces, provision of emergency Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS), and support GBV survivors to access services. UNICEF is helping to re-establish emergency helplines for children and is advising municipal governments on CCCs and minimum standards in setting up temporary shelters.

If required, UNICEF is considering redirecting emergency psychosocial support kits and community support activities, currently delivered in other communities, to the areas most affected by Eta. UNICEF, with partners, is in capacity to provide MHPSS in remote communities and temporary shelters, reaching approximately 2,000 children, and protection services and support in temporary shelters for 300 boys, girls and adolescents and their families.

The child protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) is activated under UNICEF leadership. UNICEF and 13 CP AoR partners are focusing their efforts on providing immediate relief in shelters, including psychosocial support, protection services to affected families and children and information to shelter coordinators on ensuring protection of girls, boys, women and other vulnerable groups. UNICEF is also part of the GBV sub-group, where partners are coordinating provision of services for GBV survivors in temporary shelters, at community level, as well as advocating for continuity of services for GBV survivors by central and municipal authorities.

Social Protection
Within the framework of current alliances, UNICEF will explore supporting the current national and local social assistance actions to help the households hardest hit by the pandemic; structures that could be used for specific support to the territories hardest hit by the hurricane.

UNICEF will promote coordination between the social protection and the humanitarian cash coordination systems, with a focus on children, and taking advantage of the recent partnership with WFP for providing nutritional advice for local governments.

EL SALVADOR
WASH
Three implementing partners (PROVIDA, ACUA and CORDES) have prepositioned WASH supplies for families and children at shelters, including: 400 hygiene kits for families, as well as soap, disinfectants and other cleaning items for shelters. Depending on the needs in the field, UNICEF with partners will install water tanks and distribute jerry cans to families in shelters and affected. The Country Office (CO) has initiated the procurement of additional hygiene items, disinfectants, soap and PPE for shelters. The WASH cluster is led by UNICEF remains active.
**Child Protection**

The CO had established agreements with leading national organizations (Red Cross, Fundasil or ACISAM) for providing psychosocial support to children and families affected by COVID-19, and tropical storms Amanda and Cristobal. The CO can expand this collaboration in response to Eta-related needs, if required.

The child protection sub-cluster is activated under UNICEF leadership, and is monitoring the situation focusing on violence against children, including GBV and MHPSS. The CO will, in collaboration with partners, provide psychosocial support to affected families and children, and will disseminate information on helplines for violence prevention and support to victims, in particular with regards to GBV.

**Communication for Development (C4D)**

The CO has developed C4D materials on prevention of COVID-19 in shelters, nutrition, prevention of violence and GBV, promotion of hygiene, and psychosocial support for shelters and affected communities.

Preliminary response actions include dissemination of preparedness messages, and phone numbers of helplines providing psychosocial and psychological support through social networks and websites.

**GUATEMALA**

**Nutrition**

The CO is available to support nutrition counselling for pregnant and lactating women and caregivers of young children, to prevent acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. This support will be adapted to the COVID-19 context. Nutrition support teams will also perform weight and height measurements in children. UNICEF will support printing of communication materials on nutrition, water and sanitation in the context of COVID-19.

**WASH**

In the locations under the Eta threat, UNICEF had pre-positioned three water treatment plants available for immediate response in Izabal, Petén and Alta Verapaz departments. Two plants with capacity for 2,000 litres/hour each, and a third plant with capacity for 5,000 litres/hour. Under UNICEF leadership, the WASH cluster is active and monitoring the situation.

**Education**

The CO is acquiring hygiene kits and PPE for schools that might be used as shelters, in case of evacuations, to ensure that schools comply with the sanitary protocols.

**Child Protection**

Depending on the evolution of needs, the CO will procure additional PPE and, in the event that shelters were to be set up for more than three days, assess the possibility of providing equipment or recreational material for psychosocial care of girls and boys as well as installing separate bathrooms for girls and boys.

**BELIZE**

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 emergency response, agreements and workplans with partners already address response activities, as it relates to risk communication messages on WASH and nutrition counselling for pregnant and lactating mothers and caregivers of young children. Emergency response activities will address service delivery for WASH and nutrition hampers as a request has come in from the National Emergency Management Organization for food packets and water. Supplies are presently being procured by partners, such as the Belize Red Cross, who is also finalizing an agreement with UNICEF and the City Council to provide child friendly spaces. Quantities of hygiene kits have already been distributed to the Government and are available at national and sub-national levels. These include WASH kits and nutrition hampers. These materials can be diverted to those affected by the flooding/displacement caused by the storm.

**Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Strategy**

UNICEF Country Offices (COs) across the sub-region are monitoring the situation, in coordination with authorities and partners. Governments are leading the monitoring of the situation, evacuations and response to localized emergencies, through national disaster response agencies.

In countries in the path of Eta, UNICEF COs have pre-positioned supplies and capacity for immediate response during the first hours. Nevertheless, additional resources, including funding, staff and supplies will be required to scale up the response in view of the actual impact and the governments’ response capacity. COs are currently preparing preliminary response plans and budgets, which are being revised as new information on the impact and needs is available.

Given the current COVID-19 context and the latent risks in shelters and vulnerable communities, across its response actions, UNICEF will ensure the implementation of biosafety protocols and the availability of personal protective equipment for affected people and frontline workers.

In Nicaragua, the governmental response is coordinated by the National System for the Prevention, Mitigation and Attention of Disasters (SINAPRED). The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and the United Nations Emergency
Team (UNETE) are monitoring the situation in communication with national authorities and are ready to provide support in case of a request from the national government. In case of an activation of UNICEF response, focus would be in the Caribbean communities, initially on WASH but with potential scale up with actions in education in emergencies, early childhood development (ECD), child protection, including GBV, and risk communication.

For Honduras, response efforts are coordinated by the National Contingency Coordination Agency (COPECO). UNETE and the Humanitarian Network groups are in close coordination with COPECO. UNETE is leading the registry of sectoral inputs to support humanitarian assistance to impacts of Eta and is preparing to deliver as its trajectory evolves. The national government has issued an Emergency Declaration, allocating HNL 50 million (US$2 million) for humanitarian response and has requested sector Clusters to identify available support in case it is needed. The Honduran Government has also requested technical assistance in the appropriate setup of temporary shelters for population under evacuation. UNICEF is coordinating and co-leading the activation of the WASH Cluster and Child Protection AoR and is ready to activate the Education Cluster as needed, given current schools closure due to COVID-19. UNICEF geographical focus areas are those departments with the highest areas exposed to floods and to hazards. UNICEF Honduras Country Office is preparing to reallocate resources and to identify funding gaps and supply needs to provide sectoral humanitarian response based on the Core Commitments for Children and is also preparing to conduct Needs Assessments.

The government of El Salvador has issued a red alert and is focusing on preparedness, based on best practices and lessons learned from the pass of Tropical Storm Amanda and Cristobal in May 2020. The Civil Protection System is activated, along with Technical Sectorial Commissions, including the Technical Health Commission. UNETE and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) are activated and monitoring the situation. National authorities are participating in HCT. WASH, Protection, Food Security and Nutrition sectors are activated to respond to the emergency, led / co-led by UNICEF. National sectoral authorities and NGOs participate in these clusters. UNICEF is coordinating efforts with line ministries, local governments, and NGOs through the cluster system, to strengthen coordination, avoid duplication and identification of synergies.

In Guatemala, CONRED leads the governmental preparedness and response efforts. The HCT is active and monitoring the situation, with participation of national authorities. Clusters have been activated by the Resident Coordinator. UNICEF is coordinating and co-leading the activation of the WASH, Education and Nutrition Clusters, and the Child Protection AoR. UNICEF CO participates in UNETE and the HCT and maintain coordination with CONRED.

In Belize, the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) has been active in putting in place preparedness measures, based on the measures implemented earlier this year during other tropical storm threats. The UNETT has been activated and meeting regularly. Partners are on standby, ready to support in case of need and depending on the scale of impact.

UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO), in order to reinforce efforts at CO level, has transferred approximately US$200,000 from Global Thematic Humanitarian funds to COs, on a no-regret basis, for immediate procurement of supplies in local markets, mobilizing supplies and personnel to the affected areas, and supporting partners as needed. LACRO provides technical support to COs’ teams, and monitors closely the situation in communication with COs and partners.

UNICEF is part of the OCHA-led Regional Group on Risks, Emergencies and Disasters for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC), which is meeting daily. Sectoral coordination mechanisms have been also activated at regional level. For instance, the Regional WASH LAC Group, co-led by UNICEF and PAHO, is in close communication with the WASH Sector Coordinators from the affected countries, supporting the production of bulletins, developing a Hurricane Eta and COVID-19 WASH Sector Response Plan form, rapid WASH assessment forms for shelters, schools, health centres and communities, a modular calculator for WASH stock requirements and support for calculation of people in need and targets.

Human Interest Stories and External Media

NICARAGUA

On 3 November, UNICEF Nicaragua and the Regional Office issued a press release on the first impacts of Eta in Nicaragua. The press release had a high visibility and was featured by international media, highlighting the needs of children. The CO has disseminated messages focused on encouraging families to implement the protection measures indicated by the official institutions, reaching 34,000 people directly so far. UNICEF also provided information and interviews to more than 20 media about the impact of the hurricane on the lives of children.

In process is the hiring of a professional photographer and video production team, to document Eta's impact on communities, especially children, through life stories and UNICEF humanitarian assistance.
HONDURAS

UNICEF Honduras issued a press release on 5 November. Preliminary prevention messages for personal security during a hurricane have been designed and disseminated among relevant sectoral stakeholders, including the private sector, via email and social media. In addition, prevention messages are being sent through the U-Report platform to 13,560 people in real time before, during and after Hurricane Eta. Every five minutes, there is a new user that is receiving information from a U-Report Bot. Three spots on measures to be taken during a hurricane emergency have been disseminated on social media, directly in 39 municipalities, as well as via 30 national radio and television stations.

Who to contact for further information:

Bernt Aasen
Regional Director a.i.
Latin America and the Caribbean
Email: baasen@unicef.org

Michele Messina
Regional Emergency Advisor
Latin America and the Caribbean
Email: mmessina@unicef.org

Laurent Duvillier
Regional Chief of Communication
Latin America and the Caribbean
Email: lduvillier@unicef.org