

www.ifrc.org
Saving lives,
changing minds.

Information Bulletin no. 2

Hurricanes Eta and Iota

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Information Bulletin N° 2	Date of issue: 18 November 2020
Date of disaster: Ongoing	IFRC Focal Points: Head of Central America CCST Nelson Aly nelson.alyrodriguez@ifrc.org Head of Emergency Operations (HEOps) Carmen Ferrer email: rrheops.panama@ifrc.org
IFRC Category allocated to the disaster: Orange . An emergency which affects large areas/and/or a greater number of beneficiaries. The situation could imply greater international attention or be subject to greater response complexity.	
National Societies activated: Nicaraguan Red Cross, Honduras Red Cross, Guatemalan Red Cross, and Colombian Red Cross.	

This bulletin is being issued for information only; it reflects the current situation and details available at this time. Operation Update no. 1 with more details of Emergency Appeal Hurricane Eta will be published and available [here](#).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Life-threatening flash flooding and river flooding is expected through Thursday, 19 November across Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala.
- Even before Iota struck, about 4 million people across Central America had been affected by Hurricane Eta in the same regions and communities.
- On 8 November 2020, the IFRC issued an [Emergency Appeal for 20 million Swiss francs](#) to assist 15,000 families (75,000 people) affected by Hurricane Eta to support the Guatemalan, Honduran, and Nicaraguan Red Cross. Appeal coverage available here: [donor response](#).
- 2 million Swiss francs have been allocated from the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama.
- Relief items have been dispatched from the Regional IFRC warehouse (Humanitarian hub) in Panama to support Honduras and Nicaragua's operations. Items are being prepared to be sent to other countries in the coming days. Rapid Response Personnel and Emergency Response Units (ERUs) have been activated and deployed to Central America.
- The Federation Wide Approach will be implemented for this operation. The IFRC team is working to develop the guidelines and coordinating with all involved National Societies.



families affected by Hurricane Iota. Source HRC, 17 November 2020

Are you interested in supporting? Your act of kindness could make all the difference to the affected families.

Donate Now

CONTEXT



*Red Cross aerial assessments in the Sula Valley to support emergency planning **with the support of Airbus**. Source: IFRC, 17 November 2020.*

Hurricane Iota

On 3 November, Hurricane Eta struck Nicaragua as a Category 4 storm, causing landslides, and flooding that displaced thousands and left scores of people dead or missing in Central America and part of the Caribbean.

The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season has been historically active, with Iota bringing the season's count to the 31st named storm, breaking the 2005 record when 28 named storms. Iota originated as a tropical wave that moved into the Eastern Caribbean on 10 November. The storm quickly strengthened into a hurricane on 15 November, becoming a Category 5 hurricane on 16 November. Iota made landfall in Nicaragua and the Gracias a Dios region in Honduras as a category 5 hurricane on 17 November. Iota then rapidly weakened as it moved inland and dissipated on 18 November.

Iota dissipated quickly with winds near 40 mph, according to an advisory from the US National Hurricane Center. Though the wind speeds are dying down, Central America is still at risk for life-threatening flash flooding, river flooding, and mudslides due to the amount of rain caused by both hurricanes. Already parts of the region are coping with overloaded rivers bursting to flip roofs onto streets and down electrical poles. Even before Iota struck, about 3.6 million people across Central America had been affected by Eta, a storm that hovered for days over Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala, with heavy rains creating flooding and landslides.¹

EARLY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE²

National Societies are responding to the emergency and providing much-needed support and assistance. Volunteers and staff have been deployed to remote locations following safety protocols to protect communities and resources. Activities are being supported by the Americas Regional Office and working together with Red Cross Movement partners, authorities, community organizations, and other organizations. Iota's actual impact will be clearer within a couple of days when humanitarian responders and assessment teams can arrive in the affected areas. Damages assessments have been delayed due to access and lack of stability in communications. Thanks to Airbus Air Foundation, the Red Cross teams are conducting air assessments and distributing initial humanitarian aid.

Nicaragua

The Nicaraguan Institute of Territorial Studies (INETER) authorities stated that Iota is the most potent hurricane that has made landfall in Nicaragua since it records tropical cyclones. It is estimated that Iota affected about 60% of Nicaragua's territory, initially impacting Puerto Cabezas and Bilwi (Northern Caribbean) and affecting the South Pacific area. There are reports of about 73,000 evacuees, 6 deaths, 4,000 homes lost, local markets and crops destroyed, and extensive damage to infrastructure and shelters. More than 53,000 people are reported to have no access to drinking water, an area where 30% of the population has access to water through electricity and 70% through wells. There are reports of landslides in Jinotega and Matagalpa where human losses and damage to infrastructure and housing could be extensive. Logistical and communication difficulties are reported for the delivery of supplies due to the destruction of Puerto Cabezas and the lack of land



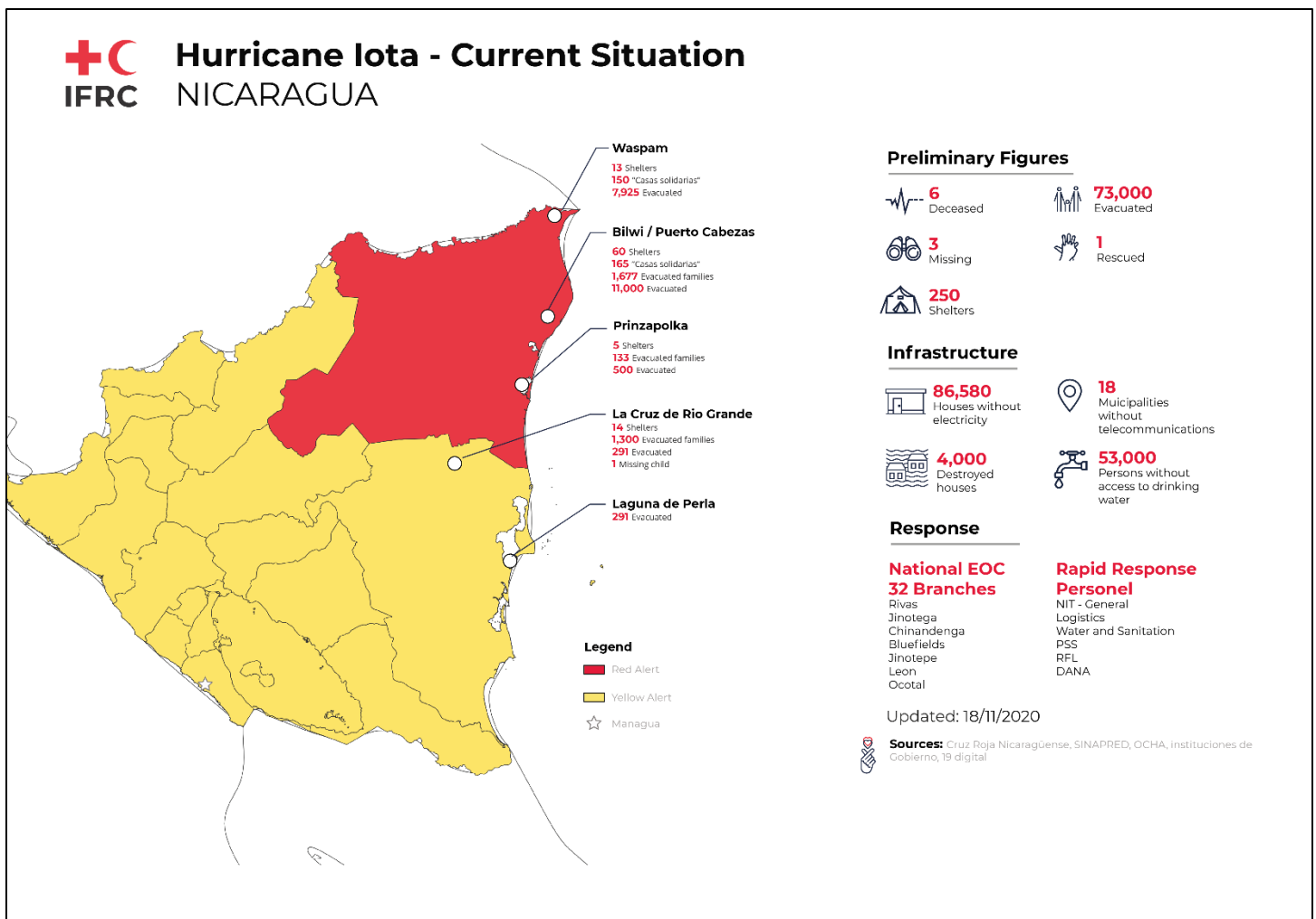
Photo: Nicaraguan Red Cross volunteers and staff supporting evacuations. Source: NRC, 17 November 2020.

¹ [CNN. Tropical Storm Iota deals devastation to Central America still recovering from Eta. 19 November 2020.](#)

² Information shared in coordination meetings of the humanitarian system and Civil Protection of the countries.

communication with Managua and Waspán. Several rivers have been flooded including Rio Coco and several reaching overflow levels. Heavy rains are expected to continue in the next 12 - 24 hours.

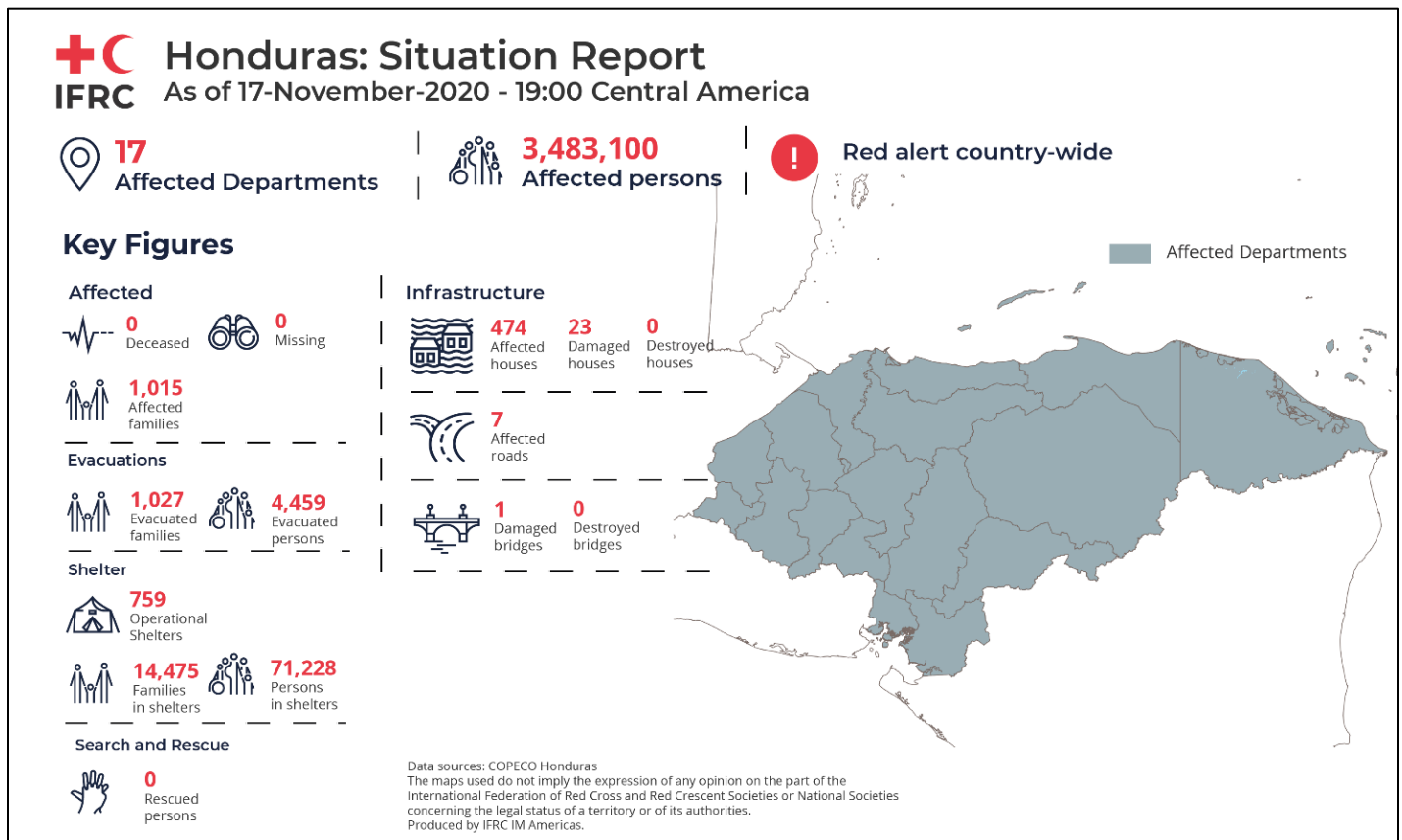
The **Nicaraguan Red Cross (NRC)** has responded by activating 32 branches at the National level, and it is supporting evacuations in several of the affected areas. 102 families have been evacuated in Rivas (Potosi, Ochomogo, Tola), Boaco, Chontales, Sebaco, Ocotal. 63 ambulances are operating nationwide, and 1,520 volunteers are activated at the national level. There were partial damages reported to the Bilwi branch with only two offices functional. The National Society has provided interviews to international media. A humanitarian caravan is on the way to Waspam. There are some isolated communities in Rivas, and the level of impact is not clear. Water treatment teams have been mobilized (one SETA water treatment plant dispatched to Waspam), and NRC has requested support to increase water production capacity due to the great need for water sources. Response teams (39 specialists) arrived in Waspam Wednesday afternoon and are expected to be fully functional and providing assistance on Thursday, November 19 (80 tons of food and household items for 5,000 families). NRC volunteers will support the government Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis (DANA) in Bilwi, Prinzapolka, and other affected areas. The Rivas branch requested immediate support on WASH, several communities in Tola isolated due to flooding. The NS is expected to dispatch a response team to Rivas by the end of the week.



Honduras

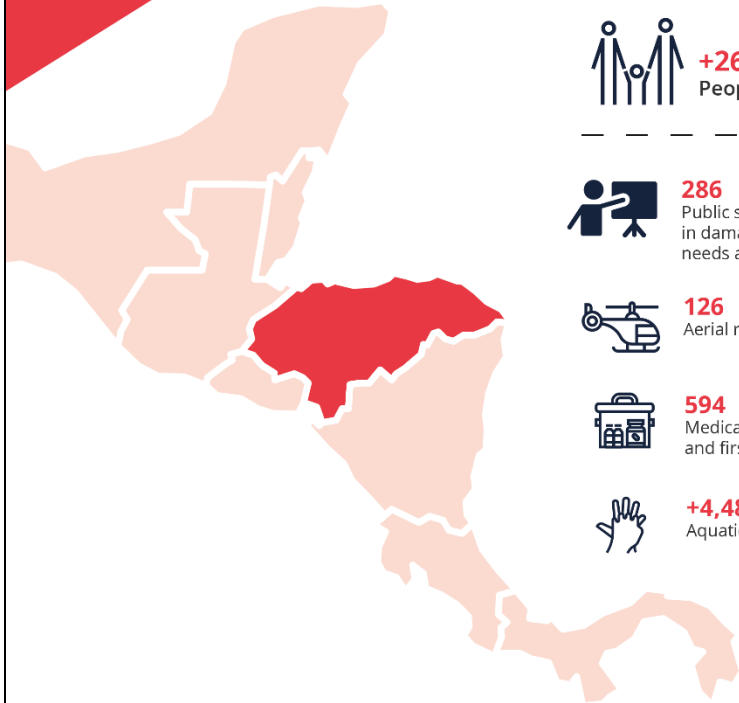
On 17 November, Iota crossed Honduran territory with a trajectory more to the south than projected, impacting the departments of Francisco Morazán, Paraíso, and Choluteca. The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team conducted assessments in coordination with the National Emergency Operation Center (EOC) located in San Pedro Sula to verify the impacts. OCHA is working on elaborating satellite images that will be provided for reference to the field teams and the Coordination Centers to establish the work areas. No alerts are reported in the areas of the dams.

The airports of Toncontin in the capital city, Juan Manuel Galv3ez in Roatan, and Golos3n in La Ceiba remain operational, while the San Pedro Sula airport will remain inoperative until 15 December 2020. National authorities have instructed two provisions during the emergency: 1) Mandatory evacuation of risk zones at the national level and 2) Restriction of vehicle circulation to avoid accidents and provide spaces for emergency vehicles' circulation. Both measures are still active.



The **Honduran Red Cross (HRC)** has prepositioned rescue boats in the south and the north of Honduras to have initial Search and Rescue capacity based on geographical potential scenarios of Hurricane Iota impact. Support on preventive evacuations with Airbus's support on the 13, 14, and 15 of November. 760 hygiene kits were distributed in collective centres in 8 communities before hurricane Iota reached the area. A management plan for volunteers was established in the areas of intervention. The IFRC team in San Pedro Sula prepared food and water to cope with 72 hours of potential lockdown and moved to a hotel with a generator. The CCST Team and the Disaster Manager for Central America based in Tegucigalpa are ready for the arrival of rapid response personnel to support the response actions on the southern parts of the country. The National Society continues to evacuate families to collective centres and others to foster homes. 700 family hygiene kits are being prepositioned in Pimienta, Villanueva, San Manuel, Puerto Cort3s, Omoa and Choloma in the northern department of Cortes to distribute in collective centres. Key evacuation and preventive messages are being shared, and the list of safe accommodations is being updated. On 18 November, the Red Cross teams in place attended the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) coordination meeting in San Pedro Sula, led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to discuss the actions implemented by all sector members to Eta and Iota's response.

Institutional actions in response to Tropical Storms Eta and Iota in Valle de Sula



+26,488 People reached through Honduran Red Cross actions



286 Public servants trained in damage analysis and needs assessment



108 Restoring family links actions



126 Aerial rescues



108 Psychosocial support and mental health actions



594 Medical assistance and first aid



504 Food kits



+4,481 Aquatic rescues



1,308 Hygiene kits

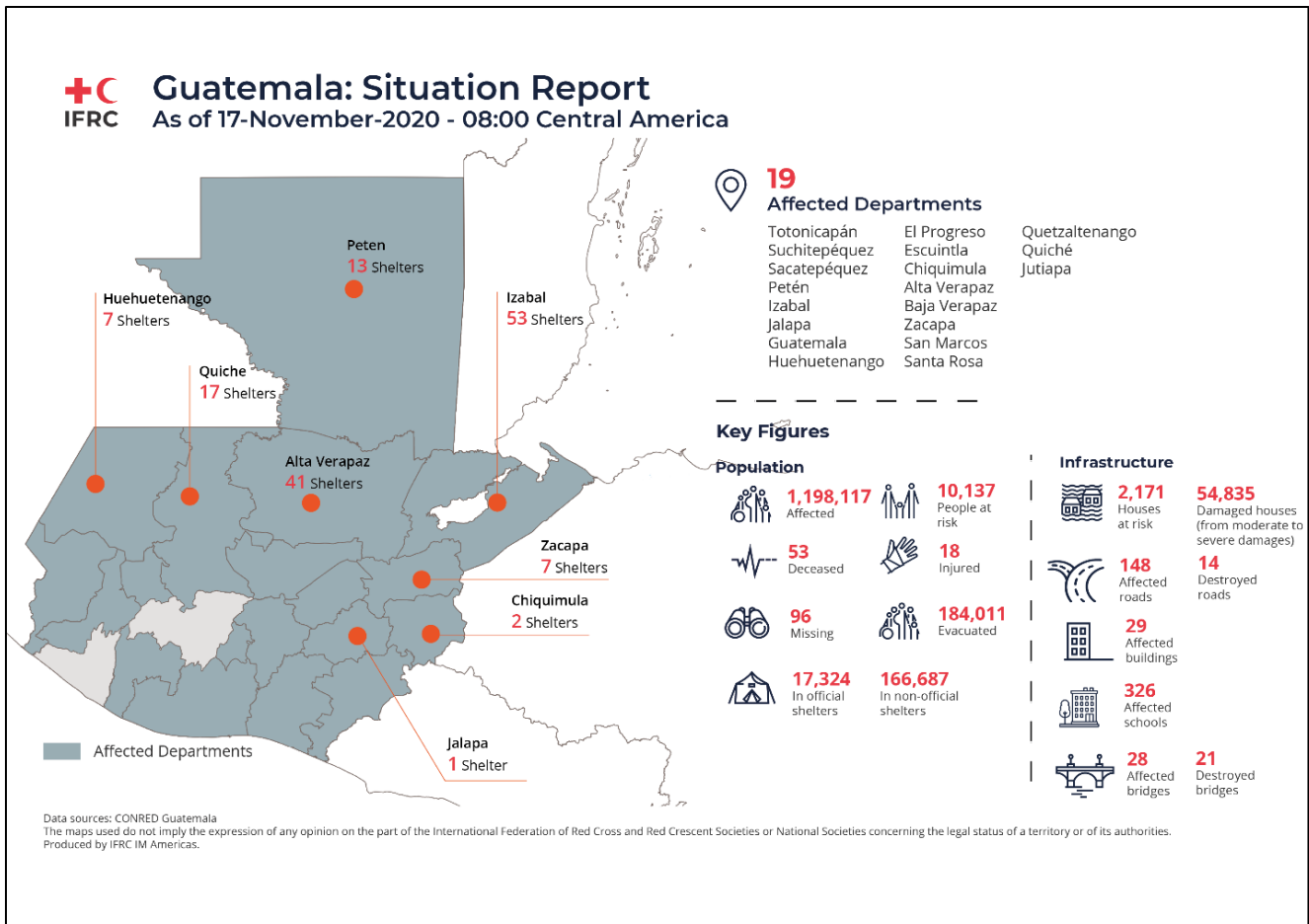


11,706 Evacuated persons

Source: Honduran Red Cross

Guatemala

Iota has dissipated as it passes through El Salvador but is causing rain in Guatemala. Rains associated with Iota started on 17 November and are expected to continue at least through 19 November, according to the National Institute of Seismology, Volcanology, Meteorology, and Hydrology of Guatemala (INSIVUMEH). Preliminary figures from the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (CONRED) indicate that as of the morning of 18 November, at least 28,901 people are affected, 2,343 persons have been evacuated, and 755 people are in collective centers. These numbers are likely to increase in the coming days as rainfall continues in areas where the soil was already saturated following Eta's passing only two weeks ago. Additional flash floods and river floods are expected, as well as landslides. So far, the departments most affected appear to be Alta Verapaz and Izabal, which are also the most affected areas by Tropical Depression Eta. Several communities continued to be isolated or inundated even before the rains associated with Iota started. However, other departments such as Chiquimula and Zacapa are also affected, and the risk of floods and landslides remains in other parts of the country. There are already reports of damaged infrastructure, including damage to bridges and roads.



The **Guatemalan Red Cross (GRC)** activated its Centre of Emergency Operations and headquarters and activated its 21 delegations to monitor Iota and the conditions expected in Guatemala. Recommendations for preparedness were disseminated via GRC's social media channels. During the first hours of the impact, volunteers in the affected areas have evacuated families in collaboration with the national police. Volunteers continue to monitor the rising river levels, and Damage and Needs Assessments are ongoing. GRC is organising daily Movement Coordination meetings with its partners, including IFRC, Spanish Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, and the ICRC. A National Plan of Action was elaborated to respond to the needs resulting from Eta's impact. It will likely be revised to adjust as needs change in the aftermath of Iota. Coordination at the national level continues via CORED, as well as at departmental and municipal levels.

Colombia

The islands of San Andres and Providencia, located just northwest of Colombia's mainland, have, for the first time in recorded history, felt the impact of a Category 5 hurricane. At least two people are dead, one person is missing, and 112 people were evacuated from Providencia, Colombia. Evaluations continue in San Andres and Providencia Islands. Main needs may include shelter, food, health care, and access to water and sanitation facilities. Preliminary information: 224,000 people in Antioquia, Choco, Bolivar, Guajira, and Arauca departments have been affected.

The **Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS)** has mobilized its response teams to both islands to carry out assessment's aftermath of Hurricane Iota. Preliminary needs assessed: Shelter, WASH, Food, and Health. The CRCS has activated its crisis room, branches, and volunteers. Teams have been carrying out evacuations, rescues, and first aid activities, among others. A 15-people Emergency Medical Team plus a Logistics team have been deployed to Providencia and San Andrés. The CRCS is in coordinating with the national response system (UNGRD). The National Society has activated approximately 50 thousand Swiss francs from its relief fund. The National Society is preparing a Plan of Action to request for DREF funds.

For more information related to Belize, Panama and Costa Rica please see below the link to access to the Emergency Plans of actions:

- [Panama- Hurricane Eta: DREF Operation](#)

- [Costa Rica – Hurricane Eta: DREF Operation](#)
- [Belize – Hurricane Eta: DREF Operation](#)

RED CROSS MOVEMENT COORDINATION

The Red Cross Movement has been very active since the beginning of the emergency, participating in regional coordination meetings called by the IFRC. Partners National Societies (PNS) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are actively sharing information with National Societies, the IFRC, and counterparts in their respective headquarters. PNS, with Central American presence have put at disposal vehicles and human resources working in development projects in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.

In the COVID-19 context, the localization approach and the use of local resources are essential. To this end, the Canadian Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Spanish Red Cross, German Red Cross, and Italian Red Cross are ready to support the affected National Societies and IFRC actions. Other PNS have been in close communication with the Americas Regional Office and participating in the coordination meetings and information sharing.

IFRC Partnerships and Resource Development Department (PRD) has been coordinating with internal and external partners. There have been meetings to share needs and actions taken by the Red Cross to support the communities. In-kind donations are being received from donors (more details will be available in the Operations update to be published end of this week). Rapid Response Personnel have been deployed to several locations (remote and field). Members from Canadian Red Cross, Mexican Red Cross, Panamanian Red Cross, American Red Cross, Dominica Red Cross, Swedish Red Cross, and Danish Red Cross are supporting the operations.

In partnership with PIRAC (French Red Cross), relief items will be dispatched from Guadalupe to Guatemala and Honduras. Also, Emergency Response Units are on the way to support the relief actions in Honduras to address urgent needs related to Sanitation, Water, Hygiene promotion, Health, IT & Telecom, and logistics. ERUs are supported by the Spanish Red Cross, German Red Cross, and the Canadian Red Cross.

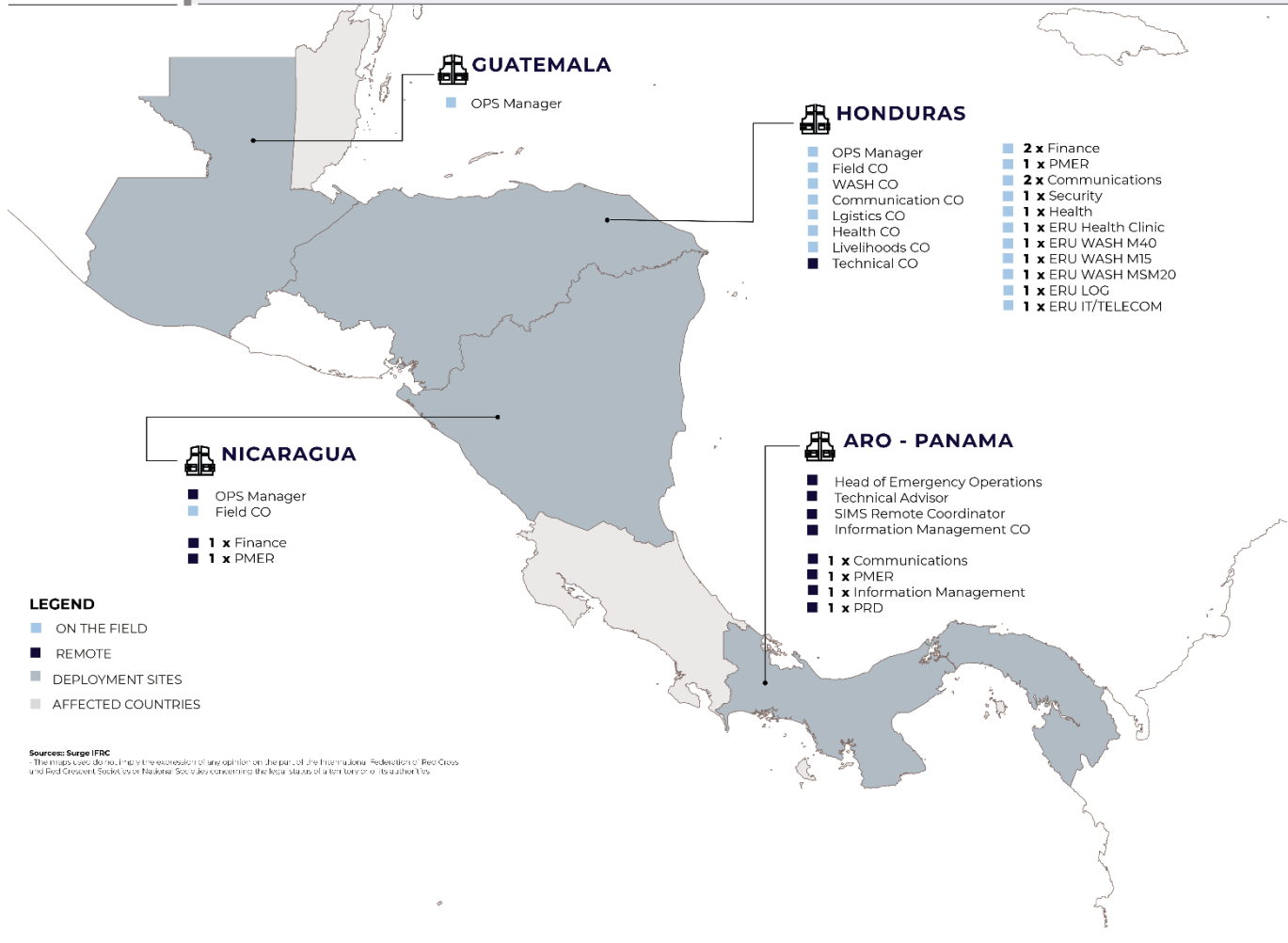
IFRC has also been taking part in meetings with CEPREDENAC (Regional coordination platform in Central America), OCHA, UN Agencies, and other international organizations located in the region and/or responding to the emergency. Collaboration and support between different actors and agencies are crucial when considering the current Covid-19 restrictions and limitations.

International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles (IDRL) : With the technical support of IFRC, Honduran Red Cross is leading the development of the IDRL regulation to operationalize in Honduras: The new IDRL law was published in the Official Gazette of Honduras on 15 November. It is expected to impact positively the Movement response in Honduras since customs procedures will be simplified and more expedite under the new, which exonerates of all taxes and duties usually applicable under common law on the importation of disaster relief items all eligible humanitarian actors (including the three components of the Movement). The new law also provides special facilities related to visa obtention, work permits, and driving license for humanitarian personnel. In coordination with the Guatemalan Red Cross, IFRC prepared a draft emergency decree based on the IFRC IDRL Model Emergency Decree for the consideration of the Guatemalan authorities and the CCAH. The proposed draft is informed by the 2019 IDRL study recommendations in Guatemala and the lessons learned from the 2018 response to the volcanic eruption of Volcan de Fuego.



Central America: Hurricanes Eta and Iota Rapid Response Personnel

Updated: 18/11/2020



IFRC Resources

- [GO Platform](#) is constantly updated. Check future [Field Reports](#) from National Societies for updates.
- [Emergency page in GO](#)
- Regional [Preparedness dashboard](#)
- [Hurricane monitoring Dashboard](#).
- [2020 Regional Contingency Plan](#)
- [Twitter IFRC Americas](#)

Other Resources

- [OCHA's 345W Platform with pre-positioned resources to date.](#)
- [Hurricane Eta in ReliefWeb.](#)
- [Collaborative spreadsheet for damage assessment \(in progress\).](#)
- [Copernicus' Emergency Management Service for satellite imagery.](#)

Contact information

For further information, specifically related to this operation please contact:

In the IFRC Americas Regional Office:

- Nelson Aly, Head of Central America CCST, email: nelson.alyrodriguez@ifrc.org
- Stephen Mcandrew, Deputy Regional Director; email: stephen.mcandrew@ifrc.org
- Felipe del Cid, Continental Operations Manager; email: felipe.delcid@ifrc.org
- Carmen Ferrer, ; Head of Emergency Operations (HEOps); email: rrheops.panama@ifrc.org

For Resource Mobilization:

- Sandra Romero, Partnerships and Resource Development, phone: +507 66706800, email: sandra.romero@ifrc.org

For Media and communications:

- Susana Arroyo, Communications Manager, phone:+506 84161771, email: susana.arroyo@ifrc.org

For Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER):

- Maria Larios, Regional PMER Manager, phone: +507 6997 3846 email: maria.larios@ifrc.org

For Logistics and mobilization table

- Mauricio Bustamante, Regional Logistics coordinator, phone: +507 317 3050; email: mauricio.bustamante@ifrc.org

In IFRC Geneva:

- Antoine Belair, Senior Officer, Operations Coordination; Disaster and Crisis (Prevention, Response and Recovery); email: antoine.belair@ifrc.org



How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.