



KEY PRIORITIES

4.5 million

AFFECTED PEOPLE

24,600

DAMAGED HOUSES

High risk

OF DISEASE
OUTBREAKS

5.1

INFORM CLIMATE
CHANGE RISK SCORE

FUNDING AND
RESPONSE CAPACITY

INSIVUMEH

CONRED

WFP, UNHCR, IOM

National Red Cross

CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

Since 1 November 2023, above-average rainfall has been severely affecting Guatemala, mainly because of a cold front passing through the country and El Niño intensifying the rainy season (ICC accessed 14/11/2023; INSIVUMEH accessed 14/11/2023). This rainy season has extended beyond the typical May–October period. As at 20 November, the heavy rains had resulted in 67 people dying, 13 being reported missing, and seven suffering from injuries. An estimated 4.5 million people had been affected by the heavy rain, 24,000 people had been directly affected, and 15,000 were at risk to be also impacted (CONRED accessed 20/11/2023). The most affected areas are the northeastern departments of Alta Verapaz, Izabal, and Petén (Ojoconmipisto 10/11/2023; SWI 06/11/2023). The figures of affected people have already surpassed those of the 2022 rainy season.

As at 20 November, over 24,600 houses, 56 bridges, 39 schools, and 428 roads were structurally damaged, and 1,407 houses were reported to be at risk or vulnerable to damages with oncoming rain, 16 bridges and five schools were destroyed (CONRED accessed 14/11/2023; Ojoconmipisto 10/11/2023). As at 13 November, over 2,100 people were in need of shelter in the affected departments (OCHA 13/11/2023). The heavy rainfall has led to the Xalbal River overflowing, affecting drainage systems and access to drinking water in the communities of Chitalón, Pueblo Nuevo, Santa María Candelaria, and Xalbal. As at 14 November, these communities had been without drinking water service for more than ten days (Prensa Comunitaria 14/11/2023). The presence of stagnant water and use of contaminated water are likely to increase waterborne diseases in these communities.

Guatemala has a score of 5.1 in the INFORM Climate Change Risk Index, putting it at high risk and among the countries most vulnerable to climate change and most exposed to natural hazards in the world (EC accessed 14/11/2023).

ANTICIPATED SCOPE AND SCALE

The cold front in northeastern departments is likely to remain in place until March 2024 and to continue to cause abundant rain and cloudiness from the Caribbean Sea. Thunderstorms are likely over the caribbean, northern, and northern transversal regions, as well as scattered showers over the rest of the country. The winds could accelerate up to 60kph in the central regions of the country and are likely to affect crossing bridges, result in the falling of tree branches and billboards, and damage communication infrastructure (Prensa Libre 23/10/2023; ICC accessed 14/11/2023).

Heavy rains and floods are likely to affect the harvest season and crops, compromising livelihoods and increasing food insecurity levels in the country. From September 2023 to February 2024, 3.1 million people (18% of the total population) are projected to be acutely food-insecure – i.e. face Crisis (IPC Phases 3) or worse levels – and need emergency food assistance (WFP 02/11/2023; IPC 28/06/2023).

HUMANITARIAN CONSTRAINTS

The heavy rainfall has damaged several roads and bridges. Humanitarian responders have been unable to access the communities of La Unión in Zacapa and Sacapulas in Quiché department because of landslides and flooding making the roads completely inaccessible. The roads connecting Quiché and Alta Verapaz departments are also damaged (Ojoconmipisto 06/11/2023). The Guatemalan Air Force is assisting in the delivery of resources to communities in Huehuetenango, where they have no land access (OCHA 13/11/2023). As at 20 November, it was unknown whether any rural communities had been reached.

CRISIS IMPACTS

Shelter

As at 20 November, almost 1,400 houses were at risk, over 550 houses were severely damaged, and over 660 had suffered from mild damage (CONRED accessed 14/11/2023). Over 2,100 people were seeking refuge in 12 shelters in the departments of Alta Verapaz (three shelters), Chimaltenango (one shelter), Escuintla (one shelter), Izabal (four shelters), and Petén (three shelters) (OCHA 13/11/2023).

Food security

El Niño conditions have affected the second harvest of basic grains in the country. From September 2023 to February 2024, 3.1 million people (18% of the total population) are projected to be acutely food-insecure (facing IPC 3 levels or worse) and need emergency food assistance (WFP 02/11/2023; IPC 28/06/2023). The recent floods and rainy season are likely to aggravate the needs of food-insecure people. 46.5% of children between 6–59 months of age countrywide also experience chronic malnutrition (WFP 02/11/2023). Essential crops have been damaged, with maize being the most affected crop, likely affecting communities dependent on agriculture and their access to staple food (LH 08/11/2023).

Health and WASH

The heavy rainfall has caused the overflowing of the Xalbal River, affecting drainage systems and access to drinking water in the communities of Chitalón, Pueblo Nuevo, Santa María Candelaria, and Xalbal. As at 14 November, these communities had been without drinking water service for more than ten days (Prensa Comunitaria 14/11/2023). As at 20 November, there were no updates on water services, which likely remained limited.

Above-average rainfall during the rainy season has increased the incidence of waterborne diseases, such as dengue. As at 17 November, there were over 53,000 cases reported, with an unspecified number of deaths because of the disease. There were also 33 cases of chikungunya and 23 of Zika (PL 17/11/2023; Fundación IO 04/11/2023). The most affected areas are Área Sur Oriente, Baja Verapaz, Escuintla, Petén, Quetzaltenango, Sacatepéquez, and Zacapa. As at mid-August 2023, there were 4,900 people with dengue fever across the country, and 45 municipalities were classified to be at high risk of outbreaks (PL 18/07/2023). Waterborne diseases are likely to increase as a result of the presence of stagnant water and mosquitoes.

Impact on critical infrastructure

At least 17 bridges and five schools have been destroyed, while 63 bridges, 90 schools, and 465 roads have been damaged, especially affecting children in rural indigenous communities (Ojoconpistito 10/11/2023; CONRED accessed 20/11/2023; Prensa Comunitaria 16/11/2023).

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS

Rainy season and El Niño

The effects of Hurricane Julia, which affected over 1.4 million people in the country in October 2022, are compounding the impact of the rainy season (IFRC 24/02/2023). The current rains and flooding are also affecting the same departments that experienced Hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020. These areas are prone to environmental hazards and host mostly indigenous communities who are vulnerable and attached to their territories (Prensa Comunitaria 06/11/2023). According to the Guatemalan National Coordination for Disaster Reduction (CONRED), the country is going through a cold front, which is simultaneously occurring with El Niño. El Niño has been affecting Guatemala for several years, mainly in 2015, 2016, and 2018. The most affected departments tend to be Baja Verapaz, Chiquimula, El Progreso, Guatemala, Jalapa, Jutiapa, Quiché, and Zacapa (OCHA 15/12/2018).

COMPOUNDING/AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Poverty

As at October 2023, 55% of the Guatemalan population faced poverty (WB accessed 20/11/2023). The poverty rate for indigenous communities is likely to be much higher; since 2020 and as at 2023, it was estimated that the poverty rate for these communities is 79%, and over 40% of the population of Guatemala was indigenous (WFP 31/05/2023; UN 30/08/2020).

People on the move

More than 100,000 people have been recorded transiting through Esquipulas in eastern Guatemala (close to the border with Honduras and El Salvador). The majority are nationals from Cuba, Ecuador, Haiti, and Venezuela, primarily heading towards North America. Around 70% of the people recorded by IOM were women travelling with children, and nearly 40% reported experiencing violence and extortion during their migration journey (IOM 10/10/2023; VOA 06/10/2023). Although Guatemala is considered a transit country, many people stay longer than expected when they run out of resources to continue their journey, increasing the humanitarian needs in the country.

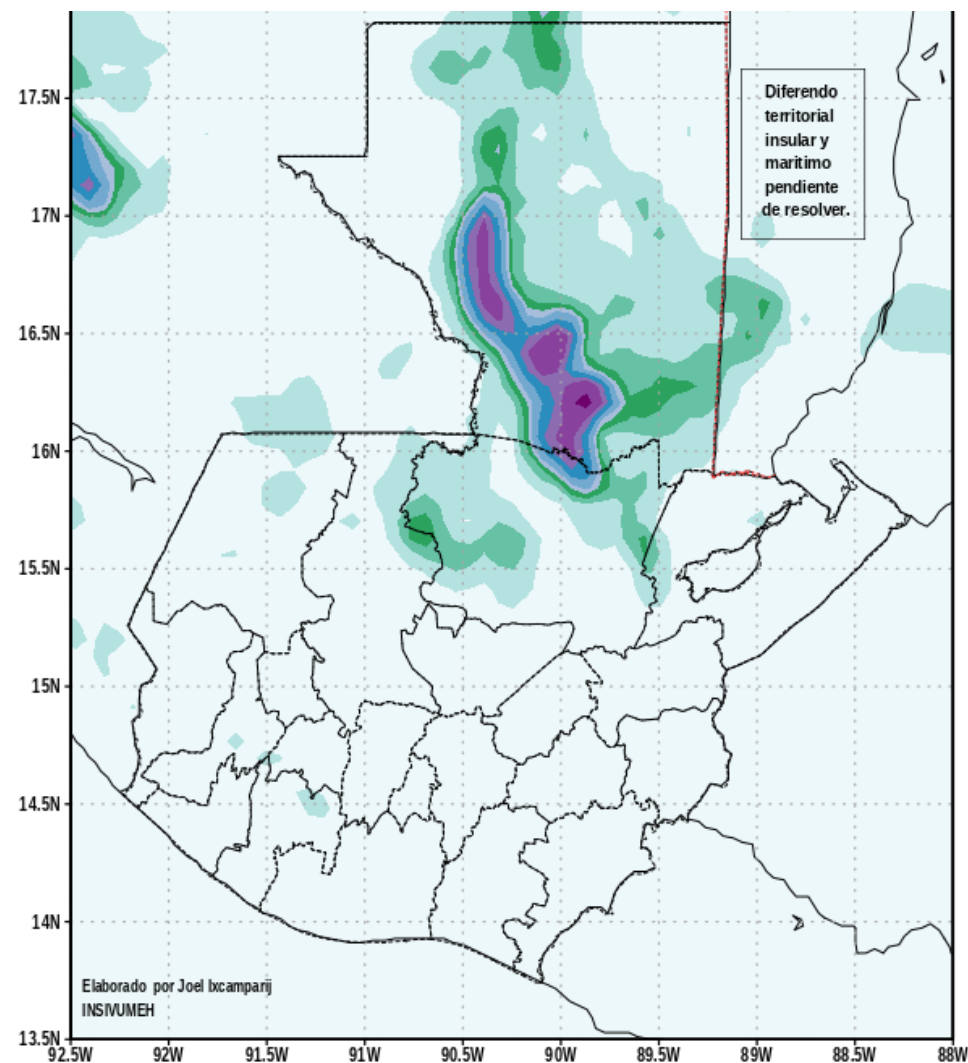
Inflation

Inflation in Guatemala increased by 5% in October compared to September, with the most expensive products being food and non-alcoholic beverages (Bloomberg Línea 08/11/2023; PL 07/11/2023). The cost of the basic food basket has also increased higher than the official minimum wage, affecting households' access to food consumption and increasing the use of stress and crisis coping strategies, which may intensify even more because of the effects of El Niño (IPC 28/06/2023).

FUNDING AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

The main response has been from the Government through CONRED, which has focused its response in 18 departments. The Government of Guatemala has not requested international aid and has reported being able to respond to the emergencies (OCHA 13/11/2023; GoG 04/11/2023).

Rain forecast as at 21 November



Source: INSIVUMEH (accessed 21/11/2023).