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DROUGHT, CROPS AND THE CENTRAL AMERICAN DRY CORRIDOR:

Evidence of an evolving crisis in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador due to the impact of El Niño

This assessment of the impact of El Niño analyzes the humanitarian situation of rural communities in the Central American Dry Corridor affected by a combination of climate irregularities, agricultural losses, limited access to water, reduced income, and increased food insecurity. Through a participatory methodology based on community consultations structured in focus groups and analysis of secondary data, the study identifies the main impacts, capacities, and priorities expressed by the populations evaluated.

The findings reveal a significant deterioration in livelihoods and food security across large areas of the region, with disproportionate impacts on women, children, and the most vulnerable households. The report aims to inform decision-making by humanitarian actors, public institutions, development organizations, and donors by providing evidence to guide response, recovery, and community resilience-building efforts.

Central America, August 2026



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The climate crisis continues to deepen the vulnerability of millions of people in Central America. During 2026, the El Niño phenomenon caused severe crop losses, reduced access to water, a drop in rural incomes, and a progressive deterioration of food security in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Between July and August 2026, Oxfam, partner organizations, and Action Against Hunger evaluated 354 communities in 58 municipalities across 15 departments of the Central American Dry Corridor, documenting the effects of drought on more than 91,000 rural households that are part of these communities. The results reveal a worrying combination of extreme agricultural losses, depletion of food reserves, water stress, and increasing limitations on livelihood recovery.

This report is a tool for decision-making and the mobilization of timely humanitarian responses to protect the most affected communities and strengthen their capacity to face future climate crises.

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1. Executive Summary

Between July and August 2026, Oxfam teams, in collaboration with their partner organizations ASEDECHI, ASEDE, and Corazón del Maíz in Guatemala; PRO-VIDA, CORDES, and Fundación Campo in El Salvador; CAFEG, ASONOG, CARITAS, and CASM in Honduras; and Action Against Hunger, conducted a rapid needs assessment (RNA) through 354 community focus groups with 4,260 participants (50.1% men and 49.9% women) across 58 municipalities in 15 departments of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, located in the Central American Dry Corridor. The assessment documents the cumulative impact of the 2026 El Niño phenomenon—erratic rainfall, a late start to the agricultural cycle, and prolonged heat wave—on the production of staple subsistence grains, rural livelihoods, access to water, migration, and the protection of the most vulnerable households in the Dry Corridor.

The household and population figures presented in this report are community estimates obtained through participatory exercises with focus groups and community stakeholders. These figures allow us to assess trends, levels of impact, and perceived needs in the communities evaluated, but they do not constitute census results or statistically representative estimates for all the territories analyzed.

The findings are consistent with a large-scale food and livelihoods crisis, superimposed on pre-existing structural vulnerability in the region. This is not an isolated crisis affecting one sector: it simultaneously impacts agricultural production, access to water, household income, family mobility, and community cohesion. Key findings include:

- Focus groups report a widespread loss of the maize harvest in their communities: of approximately 73,000 households that planted maize in the first cycle of 2026, more than 70,000 reported losses — practically all of the producing households — of which 78.6% lost between 75% and 100% of their harvest.
- Beans show a similar pattern of severity as indicated in the focus groups: 65.4% of households with losses in the communities analyzed reported having lost between 75% and 100% of production.
- Drought is cited as the main cause of maize loss in 315 of the 354 communities evaluated (89%), far above other climatic factors; the pattern is consistent in the three countries.
- Critically low staple grain reserves: 64.2% of households that still have maize reserves indicate that these will last them for three weeks or less, according to focus groups.
- Widespread water stress: focus groups indicated a reduction in flow or availability, including the household distribution network —the main source for approximately 46,000 households—, with a reduction reported in 50.5% of cases, and up to 67.3% in the community system (public tap).
- Significant livestock losses in poultry —the main productive asset of households, frequently managed by women—, 73.1% of poultry households reported losses.
- Accelerated increase in the cost of basic goods: prices of essential foods increased between 11% and 54% in Guatemala, between 12% and 40% in Honduras, and up to 85% (sugar) in El Salvador, between July-August 2025 and July-August 2026, as reported by participants in focus groups.
- Assistance gap: The analysis carried out in the focus groups suggests that about 62,000 households require food in kind and around 58,000 cash transfers, compared to non-governmental cash assistance coverage of only about 5,100 households (8.8% of the demand).
- Mobility and migration: Focus groups identified 6,212 migratory movements of at least one household member in the three months prior to the assessment (May-July 2026); 20.1% of these were international. Several communities also reported the return of deported migrants or those returning without money, which adds pressure on already scarce resources.
- Gender and child impacts: Women represented 49.9% of participants (57.0% in Guatemala), reflecting their central role in water management, backyard production, and household care.

The assessment indicates that the crisis is in a phase of active deterioration of the agricultural cycle with direct implications for food availability and household income over the next three to twelve months. The estimated planting intentions reported in the focus groups for the *postrera* maize cycle (approximately 27,500 households) represent a 62% reduction compared to those that planted maize in the first cycle, and a 67.3% reduction in cultivated area, which anticipates a second season of poor yield and a prolongation of the seasonal shortage period ("seasonal famine") beyond the usual.

It is recommended a phased humanitarian response that combines: (i) food assistance through immediate multipurpose cash transfers; (ii) provision of safe water and support for storage and sanitation systems; (iii)

protection of agricultural and livestock livelihoods through inputs for the postrera cycle; (iv) attention to gender dynamics and human mobility; and (v) continuous monitoring of rainfall patterns and food prices, in coordination with national and regional risk management mechanisms (SICA, IPC/CPI, FEWS NET).

The board with the key figures

354

Communities evaluated

4,260

People participating in the Focus Groups

91,121

Households in the communities evaluated

97.7%

Households with maize losses

78.6%

Households with maize losses in the 75-100% range

64.2%

Maize reserves $\leq$ 3 weeks

50.5%

Reduced access to water (domestic network)

73.1%

Households with poultry losses

15.10%

Households receive cash transfers or food from governments

58,074

Households requesting cash transfers

8.8%

Current coverage of transfers (NGOs/UN)

6,212

Migration movements (last 3 months)



2. Humanitarian and climate context

The Central American Dry Corridor—a strip of land that crosses the Pacific coast and the lowlands of eastern Guatemala, southern and western Honduras, and eastern and central El Salvador—is one of the regions with the greatest structural vulnerability to food insecurity in the Continent of America. Millions of rural households depend on subsistence farming of maize and beans, cultivated under rainfed conditions and on soils of low fertility, making their food security directly dependent on rainfall patterns during two annual agricultural cycles: the first (May-August) and the second (August-December). Furthermore, it is one of the regions on the planet with the greatest combined exposure to droughts, hurricanes, and floods, which has led international organizations to repeatedly describe it as a global climate change "hotspot."

Since the beginning of 2026, the El Niño phenomenon has been established over the tropical Pacific, generating a pattern of below-average rainfall and above-normal temperatures across much of Central America. According to the Regional Visualization and Monitoring System (SERVIR) and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), dry conditions prevailed across most of the region starting in July 2026, with rainfall totals in the Central American Pacific not exceeding 60% of the historical average, coinciding with the geographic area of the Dry Corridor.^[2] This situation resulted in a prolongation of the heat wave (period of rainfall deficiency within the first growing season) and a general delay in the start of the season, directly affecting the phenological development of maize and beans during their most sensitive stage to water stress—flowering and grain filling.

2.1 Rainfall and its behavior in 2026

The Dry Corridor experiences recurring episodes of prolonged heat waves, but several elements distinguish the 2026 event from previous years of moderate El Niño. First, the assessment documents that 80.8% of the 354 communities reported two or more periods of rainfall deficit during the first growing season, and 39.3% reported three periods—an unusually high frequency of rainless periods within a single agricultural cycle. Second, the delay in the onset of the rains was widespread and, in several areas of Guatemala, extreme: communities in Alta Verapaz and Jalapa reported median rain start dates in June, with individual cases up to late July and mid-August 2026, which drastically compressed—or completely eliminated—the phenological window available for the first-crop maize in order to complete its cycle before the start of the dry season. Third, the pattern was one of pure scarcity and not variability: 84.5% of the communities did not report any period of excess rainfall, which rules out that the agricultural impact is due to an erratic pattern of intense rains followed by drought (as occurs in other events), and is consistent with a sustained precipitation deficit throughout the entire cycle.

These three elements—high frequency of heat waves within the cycle, severe delay in the start of rains and almost total absence of compensatory water excesses—explain why the crop loss documented in this assessment reaches exceptional levels of severity (see section 4.2): it is not a partial reduction in yield, but the total or almost total loss of the crop for most of the maize-producing households in the most affected departments.

2.2 What the early warning systems said before this assessment

Regional food security monitoring systems had already anticipated this deterioration since May 2026. FEWS NET projected that, between April and November 2026, the poorest households in the Dry Corridor—including areas of Alta Verapaz and the Western Highlands of Guatemala—would experience an anticipated lean season and be classified as Crisis (Phase 3 of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, IPC/CPI) between April and September 2026, while a significant portion of households in the rest of the three countries would remain in Severe Food Insecurity (Phase 2 IPC/CPI).^[3] For El Salvador, the projection estimated between 100,000 and 249,999 people facing food insecurity by November 2026; for Honduras, between 500,000 and 749,999 people. These projections, formulated before the peak of the July-August heat wave, now appear conservative in light of the severity of crop loss documented directly at field by this assessment ^[3].

A joint report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), published in June 2026, identified the Central American Dry Corridor as one of the global hunger hotspots requiring urgent attention between June and November 2026. According to the report, in Guatemala, approximately three million people were experiencing critical levels of food insecurity, with nearly 250,000 facing acute food insecurity; in Honduras, 1.6 million people were experiencing food crises or worse, with at least 62,000 living in extreme conditions that threatened their survival.^[4] The same report noted that food price inflation—close to 24% year-on-year in the region at the beginning of 2026—and the reduction in family remittances exacerbate the

deterioration of access to basic foods among the poorest households, a pattern that this assessment directly observes through market price monitoring (section 4.3) and the testimonies of communities that report the interruption of remittances due to the return of migrant relatives (section 4.7).

2.3 Pre-existing structural vulnerability

This climate and food deterioration is occurring against a backdrop of pre-existing structural vulnerability: The Dry Corridor concentrates rural and indigenous populations with the lowest human development indices in the region, high levels of poverty, chronic child malnutrition, and limited institutional capacity to sustain social protection systems in the face of recurring shocks. The assessment is consistent with this structural fragility through a cross-cutting finding: 81% of the households evaluated depend on subsistence farming as their primary means of livelihood (section 4.4), a concentration of risk that leaves the vast majority of the population without an alternative source of income when the agricultural cycle fails.

Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador have national climate risk management mechanisms, and in the case of Guatemala, an Anticipatory Action Framework for drought in the Dry Corridor, developed with the support of United Nations agencies and activated in previous years for departments such as Chiquimula.^[5] The Central American Integration System (SICA), through its Central American Climate Forum, and the national risk management systems of the three countries maintain regional coordination mechanisms for climate monitoring and early warning of phenomena such as El Niño, although the magnitude of the 2026 event—reflected in the severity and geographical extent of the losses documented in this assessment—has exceeded the ordinary response capacity of these systems.

2.4 Why this crisis requires a humanitarian response and not just a development response

Unlike a sudden-onset disaster, the Dry Corridor crisis is slow-onset and recurring: the affected households had already absorbed the impact of El Niño events and prolonged droughts in previous years, which progressively erodes their coping mechanisms—grain reserves, savings, livestock assets—and reduces their capacity to withstand a new shock without external assistance. The data collected in this assessment indicate that a large proportion of the affected households had already exhausted their reserves of staple grains and are experiencing crop losses—particularly in maize—that far exceed their capacity for self-sufficiency before the next harvest, making the current climatic situation a food emergency and not simply a fluctuation in agricultural production.

This logic of cumulative erosion of resilience is directly illustrated in the testimonies collected by the field teams. In communities of Lempira (Honduras), the technicians documented cases of households that no longer have the capacity to cushion the blow: without their own reserves, without remittances (due to the return of migrant relatives), and outstanding debts from the previous agricultural cycle.

"The health center has no medicine; people need help to buy food or medicine. The school lunch program hasn't been delivered for two years. People who migrated in previous years are returning, and there are no more remittances in the community. The families who have been more productive in the area by planting maize, they do not longer have any reserves; the entire community is consuming maize flour (Maseca). Families still owe money for the first planting season and don't have the funds to plant again for the second season."

— Field observation, San Lorenzo community, Lempira, Honduras (August 2026)

This testimonial, recorded by field technicians during the assessment, succinctly illustrates the complete sequence of the crisis described in this report: crop loss, depletion of reserves, interruption of remittances, agricultural debt, and the simultaneous weakening of basic health and education services. Cases like this, repeatedly documented in the 354 communities evaluated, constitute the empirical basis for the following sections.

3. Assessment Methodology

3.1 Approach

The assessment was based on structured community focus groups, directly applied in the communities by field technicians from OXFAM, partner organizations and Action Against Hunger, using a standardized instrument in digital format (KoboCollect®) that covered: characterization of households and dwellings; primary and secondary livelihoods; availability of labor and wages; agricultural production of the first and second cycles (area sown, losses per crop and main reason for loss); rainfall patterns (start date, periods of deficit and excess); basic grain reserves; access to water sources; livestock losses; recent migration; food prices; humanitarian and government assistance received; and prioritization of needs.

The information was reported in aggregate per community, so each focus group constitutes the unit of analysis, and the household figures reflect estimates provided by the participants themselves based on their knowledge of the community, having as the starting point for the analysis the total number of households and staple grain producers in each community evaluated. The figures presented herein correspond to these estimates.

Additionally, the instrument included an open-ended field for observations and comments, which field technicians voluntarily completed at the end of each focus group. Of the 354 entries, 205 contained substantive observations (more than 15 characters), which form the basis of the direct quotes and qualitative findings incorporated throughout this report (shaded boxes).

The observations taken from the comments did not follow a standardized qualitative reporting protocol, so their level of detail is heterogeneous between communities; however, they provide a layer of direct evidence that complements—and in several cases vividly corroborates—the quantitative findings.

3.2 Geographic coverage and households evaluated

The assessment was conducted between July and August 2026 through 354 community focus groups in 58 municipalities across 15 departments of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. A total of 4,260 people participated in the focus groups, of whom 2,133 were men and 2,127 were women.

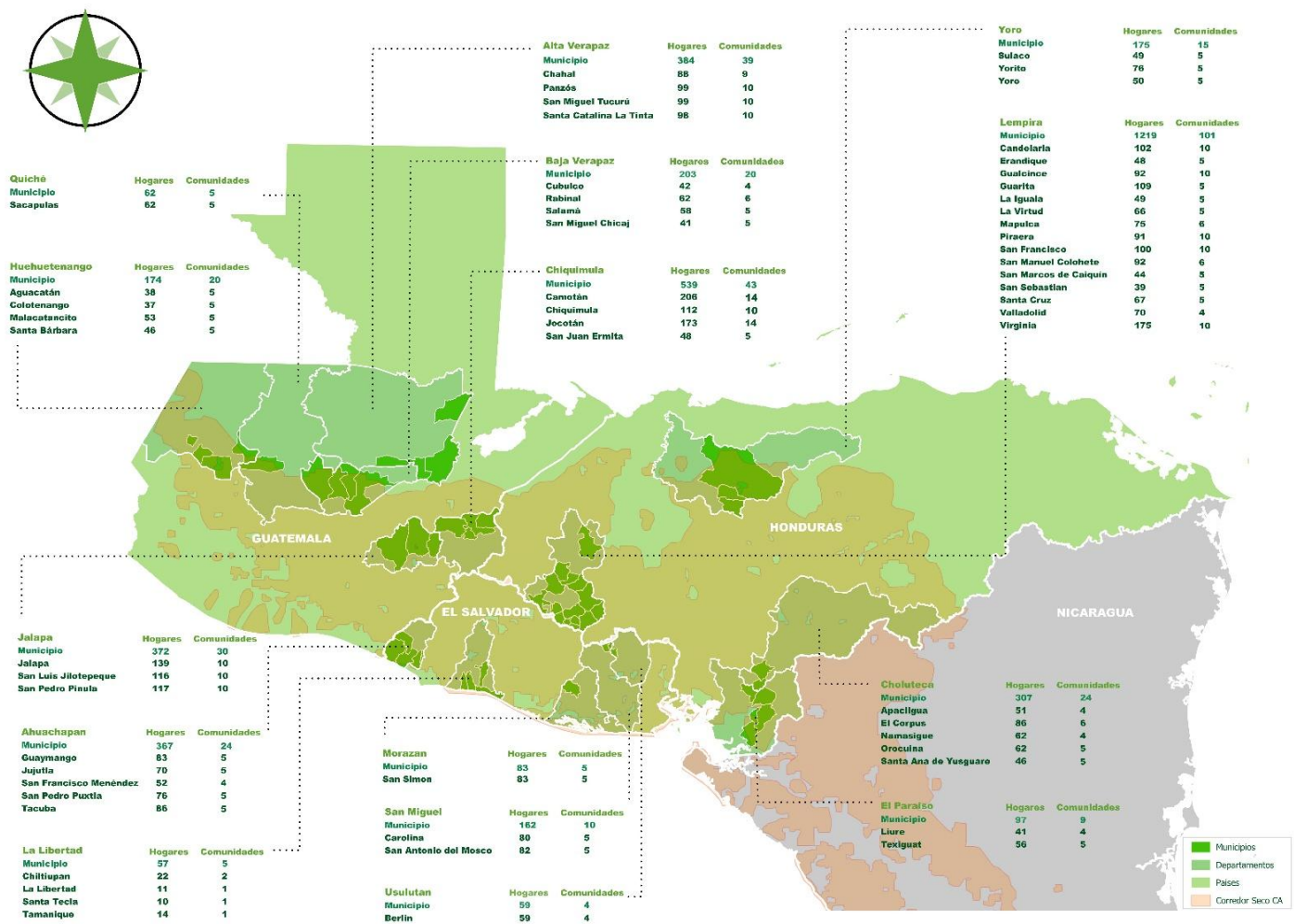
The data provided by the participants in the focus groups describe the situation based on approximately 91,000 households and 77,000 dwellings in the communities evaluated.

Country	Departments evaluated	Communities (focus groups)	Participants Men / Women	Total of participants	Households in Communities
Guatemala	Alta Verapaz	39	215 / 169	384	10705
Guatemala	Baja Verapaz	20	92 / 111	203	4828
Guatemala	Chiquimula	43	189 / 350	539	14015
Guatemala	Huehuetenango	20	66 / 108	174	6509
Guatemala	Jalapa	30	167 / 205	372	13643
Guatemala	Quiché	5	17/45	62	1388
Total - Guatemala		157	746 / 988	1,734	51,088
Honduras	Choluteca	24	152 / 155	307	5982
Honduras	El Paraíso	9	43/54	97	1000
Honduras	Lempira	101	701 / 518	1219	16560
Honduras	Yoro	15	53 / 122	175	1736
Total - Honduras		149	949 / 849	1,798	25,278
El Salvador	Ahuachapán	24	198 / 169	367	8828
El Salvador	La Libertad	5	34 / 23	57	1057
El Salvador	Morazán	5	58 / 25	83	2285
El Salvador	San Miguel	10	110 / 52	162	1612

Country	Departments evaluated	Communities (focus groups)	Participants Men / Women	Total of participants	Households in Communities
El Salvador	Usulután	4	38 / 21	59	973
Total - El Salvador		48	438 / 290	728	14,755
TOTAL		354	2,133 / 2,127	4,260	91,121

Source: Prepared by the author according to the field database of the Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026. OXFAM and partner. August 2026.

The largest number of communities evaluated are concentrated in Lempira (Honduras, 101 communities, 28.5% of the total) and in Chiquimula and Jalapa (Guatemala, 43 and 30 communities respectively), departments that constitute some of the historically most severe hotspots of the Dry Corridor. Section 7 and Annex 1 present the complete breakdown of indicators by department.



3.3 Profile of the population interviewed

The focus groups consisted of people with direct knowledge of the situation in their communities—including water availability, the state of crops, and the situation of displaced or affected households—consistent with the methodological design of the assessment, which requested community-level estimates rather than individual household surveys. Several field observations explicitly identified members of the Community Development Councils (COCODEs) and other community leaders as sources of the reported information.

Women's participation represented 49.9% of the total number of people consulted, with notable variations between countries: 57.0% in Guatemala versus 39.8% in El Salvador and 47.2% in Honduras, which suggests differences in the composition of the community leadership spaces convened in each context (see also section 4.9 on gender).

3.4 Limitations of the assessment

The household and population figures presented in this report are community estimates obtained through participatory exercises with focus groups and community stakeholders. These figures allow us to assess trends, levels of impact, and perceived needs in the communities evaluated, but they do not constitute census results or statistically representative estimates for all the territories analyzed. Therefore, the results should be interpreted as useful approximations for humanitarian prioritization and operational decision-making, rather than as exact demographic measurements.

These figures should be used for the immediate prioritization of the humanitarian response, in conjunction with the progressive verification of the data through complementary sources—official agronomic assessments, market price monitoring, national nutritional surveillance systems and IPC/CPI classifications.

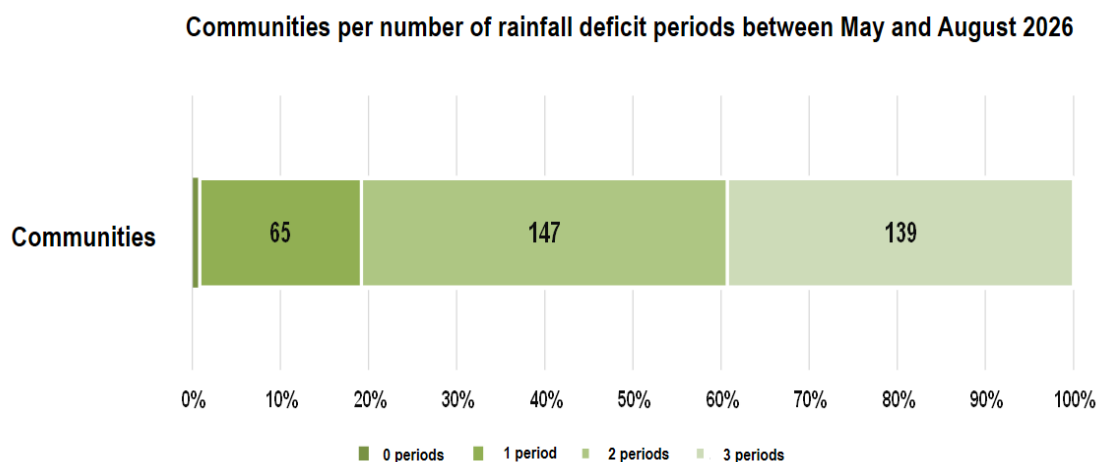
- The figures for households, dwellings, production and losses were reported by focus groups based on estimates and community knowledge, not on verified censuses or technical field measurements (e.g., agronomic yield assessments); they should be interpreted as indicative approximations of magnitude and trend, not as exact figures.
- In variables where the same household can be classified in more than one category (for example, ranges of crop loss reported for the main and secondary crops, or reasons for loss), the aggregate totals may not exactly match the number of households with losses reported in the general question, and in some departments, the sum of the ranges slightly exceeds 100% of the total reported; these data should be read as indicative of magnitude and not as exact and mutually exclusive figures.
- The sample is not statistically representative of the total universe of communities in the Dry Corridor in the three countries; it reflects the areas prioritized by OXFAM and its partner organizations according to their operational presence and severity criteria reported at the time of planning the exercise.
- Geographic coverage is uneven between countries and departments—with a strong concentration in Lempira (Honduras)—, so comparisons between departments with few focus groups (e.g., Quiché or Usulután) should be interpreted with caution.
- The instrument did not include a standardized module of coping strategies (Coping Strategies Index, CSI) or household indebtedness; the findings on these dimensions presented in section 4 are based on indirect indicators available in the database (grain reserves, losses of livestock assets, migration and market dependence) and not on a direct and standardized measurement of these practices.
- Food price data comes from monitoring local markets collected as part of the exercise and not from standardized primary measurement by the assessment teams; data for El Salvador for maize cultivation are expressed in US dollars, while those for Guatemala and Honduras are expressed in Quetzals and Lempiras, respectively, so they are not directly comparable in nominal terms between countries.
- The direct quotations included in this report come from the open field of observations of the instrument, completed voluntarily and not in a standardized manner by the field technicians; they do not constitute a representative sample of the set of communities evaluated, but an illustrative selection of the most recurrent qualitative patterns.
- The database did not include specific modules on disability, gender-based violence, or child labor; therefore, the findings in section 4.8 (gender) are based on indirect indicators and reasonable inferences from the available data, rather than on a direct and disaggregated measurement of these dimensions. This is an explicit limitation that should be addressed in future rounds.

4. Main findings

This section presents the assessment findings organized by thematic dimension. Each section combines quantitative evidence (tables, graphs, and departmental rankings), analytical interpretation of its humanitarian implications, and direct qualitative field evidence, in order to explain not only what is happening but what it means for affected households.

4.1 Rainfall behavior

The 354 evaluated communities reported a climate pattern dominated by rainfall deficits during the 2026 agricultural cycle, consistent with the El Niño conditions described in the context section. 80.8% of the communities reported experiencing two or more prolonged periods of rainfall deficit (a "heat wave" or "midsummer drought") during the first growing season, and 39.3% reported three deficit periods. In contrast, 84.5% of the communities did not report any periods of excess rainfall, which is consistent with a 2026 climate pattern of scarcity rather than excess water or flooding.



The median start date of the rainy season reported by communities varied considerably among departments, with delays of up to several months compared to the usual agricultural calendar in some areas of Guatemala. Communities in Alta Verapaz reported a median start date of June 10, 2026, with extreme cases as late as July 25; in Jalapa, some communities reported the start of the rainy season as late as August 12, 2026—that is, more than three months after the usual agricultural calendar (late April). This delay severely compressed, or completely eliminated the window available for the phenological development of early-planted maize before the start of the dry season.

Communities with rainfall deficit (number of periods)	0 periods	1 period	2 periods	3 periods
Total (354 communities)	3	65	147	139

Source: Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners. A deficit period refers to a period of marked rainfall scarcity reported by the community within the first agricultural cycle of 2026.

"In 4 months, only 128 millimeters of rain have been recorded, measured by a local climate monitor. 80 households are reported to be in a state of calamity."

— Field observation, community of Combali, Choluteca, Honduras

4.2 Agricultural production losses

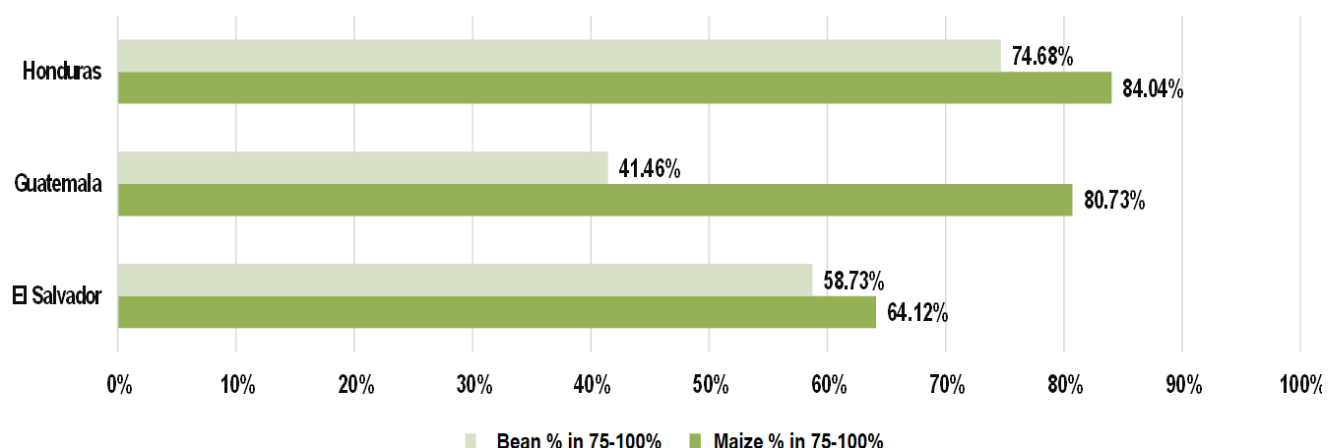
Maize is the main crop for approximately 73,000 households in the communities evaluated, followed by beans (around 13,100 households). Both are cornerstones of food security and the peasant subsistence system in the Dry Corridor. The results from the 2026 first growing season show a severe and widespread impact, with implications that will extend over the next six to twelve months.

(Main) Crop	Households with losses	≤25%	25-50%	50-75%	75-100%	% in the 75-100% range
Maize	70,342	1,086	3,334	7,122	55,322	78.6%
Beans	14,374	167	713	1,296	9,397	65.4%
Vegetables	2,071	43	6	600	1,196	57.7%
Coffee	1,900	108	721	526	415	21.8%
Other	3,635	64	47	966	2,591	71.3%

Source: Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners. The loss range columns are aggregated estimates per community; for some crops, the sum of the ranges may not exactly match the total number of households with losses due to the aggregated nature of community reporting (see limitations, section 3.4).

Maize accounts for both the largest absolute number of affected households (70,342) and the greatest relative severity: 78.6% of households with losses fall into the most severe category (75-100% of the crop lost). Beans present a similarly critical pattern, with 65.4% of affected households in the most severe loss category.¹ Coffee, the most important crop for household income in highland areas, shows a lower proportion of extreme losses (21.8% in the 75-100% range), which suggests a more gradual impact associated with reduced yield rather than total loss of the plantation—a pattern consistent with the greater root development and greater relative tolerance of the coffee plant to short-term water stress compared to maize.

Losses in 75%-100% range of maize and bean per country, reported in the focus groups



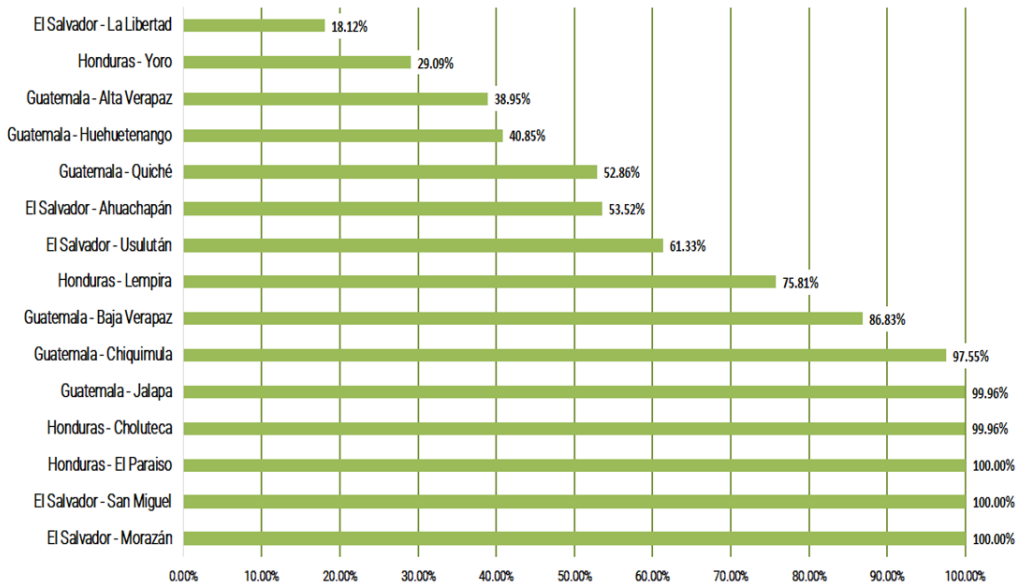
Drought is identified as the primary cause of crop loss: it was reported as the main reason in 315 of the 354 communities evaluated for maize cultivation (89.0%), compared to only 14 communities that cited flooding, 3 that cited strong winds, and none that cited excessive rainfall as the main cause. This pattern—consistent across the three countries—suggests that the agricultural impact of 2026 is primarily due to the water deficit associated with El Niño, and not to phenomena of excessive rainfall, wind, or pests.

¹Methodological note on bean cultivation losses: The number of households with bean losses (14,374) exceeds the number of households that report beans as their main crop (13,130). This apparent inconsistency is explained by the fact that many households produce beans as a secondary or complementary crop to maize, and reported losses of this secondary crop even though their main crop is maize; therefore, the number of affected households should not be interpreted as a strict subset of households that produce beans as their main crop.

Departmental ranking: severity of maize loss

The following ranking orders the 15 departments evaluated according to the percentage of households with maize loss in the most severe range (75-100%), allowing identification of the territories where the emergency response should be concentrated most urgently.

Severity of maize losses per department (Percentage of households with crop losses between 75-100%)



Country	Department	25% losses or less	25% - 50% losses	50% - 75% losses	75% - 100% losses	Percentage of losses (75% - 100%)
Honduras	El Paraíso	0	0	0	2,092	100.00%
El Salvador	Morazán	0	0	0	1,824	100.00%
El Salvador	San Miguel	0	0	0	988	100.00%
Honduras	Choluteca	1	0	0	4,278	99.96%
Guatemala	Jalapa	0	0	4	14,364	99.96%
Guatemala	Chiquimula	0	0	351	11,792	97.55%
Guatemala	Baja Verapaz	0	70	440	3,338	86.83%
Honduras	Lempira	0	177	1,864	11,878	75.81%
El Salvador	Usulután	0	0	360	571	61.33%
Guatemala	Quiché	5	635	3,000	4,558	53.52%
El Salvador	Ahuachapán	0	9	143	175	52.86%
Guatemala	Huehuetenango	50	195	680	485	40.85%
Guatemala	Alta Verapaz	932	800	1,115	1,488	38.95%
Honduras	Yoro	487	346	0	316	29.09%
El Salvador	La Libertad	0	297	75	200	18.12%

Source: Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners. Departments ordered from highest to lowest relative severity.

Six departments—Morazán and San Miguel (El Salvador), El Paraíso (Honduras), Choluteca (Honduras), and Jalapa and Chiquimula (Guatemala)—report that over 95% of households with maize losses fall within the most severe range

(75–100%), with proportions ranging from 97.55% to 100%. This indicates a widespread total or near-total crop loss, rather than a pattern of differentiated impact within the departments. Additionally, Baja Verapaz (86.83%) and Lempira (75.81%) also exhibit very high levels of severe losses, although slightly lower than those observed in the most affected group.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, La Libertad (18.12%), Alta Verapaz (38.95%), and Huehuetenango (40.85%) show considerably lower relative severity, while Yoro (29.09%), Quiché (53.52%), and Ahuachapán (52.86%) exhibit intermediate levels of impact. These differences suggest a combination of territorial factors, including microclimatic variations, the availability of water sources for supplemental irrigation, differentiated agroecological conditions, and different exposure levels to the impacts associated with the El Niño phenomenon.

“Maize will not be planted in the postrera cycle due to a lack of seed reserves.”

— Field observation, community of Talquezal, Chiquimula, Guatemala

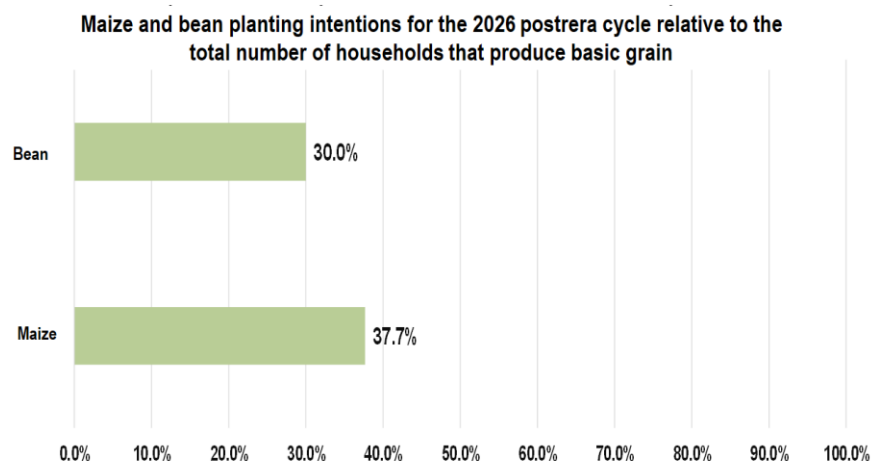
“Due to the weather, only one planting cycle is possible; there isn't enough time to harvest the second cycle. They are experiencing 100% losses. The only support they have received is from the mayor's office (urea fertilizer), which was provided to 123 families in July.”

— Field observation, community of Tixila, Lempira, Honduras

Late planting intentions: the second harvest at risk

The planting intentions reported for the *postrera* cycle (August–December 2026) constitute an additional warning sign: only about 27,500 households expressed an intention to plant maize as their main crop in the *postrera*, with an estimated area of 18,394 manzanas* (approximately 1,394 acres), a reduction of roughly 67.3% compared to the approximately 56,232 manzanas (more than 73,000 households) that reported planting maize in the first cycle. This contraction in planting intentions—likely associated with the loss of seed stock, a lack of capital to purchase inputs, and uncertainty about the continuation of rainfall—foreshadows a second season of low yields and a longer period of seasonal hunger further on than usual in the region. Beans, on the other hand, show a much higher intention to plant in the *postrera* season than in the first one (about 21,900 households and 11,023 manzanas, compared to 13,130 households and 7,988 manzanas), consistent with the traditional role of the *postrera* season as the main cycle of this crop in much of the Dry Corridor.

*(manzana is a unit of area used in Central American countries.)



However, several communities in Lempira report that their local agroclimatic calendar does not simply include a *postrera* cycle, regardless of the conditions of the first—a structural limitation, not just a situational, that the response must consider when designing support for the second half of the year—:

"There is only one planting cycle, in May and June. They grow maize as the main crop, beans as a secondary crop, and sorghum as a third crop (120 families plant it on 180 manzanas). There is no irrigation; that is the main reason why they don't do a second planting cycle. They have few reserves because by October they already expect to have the current year's harvest."

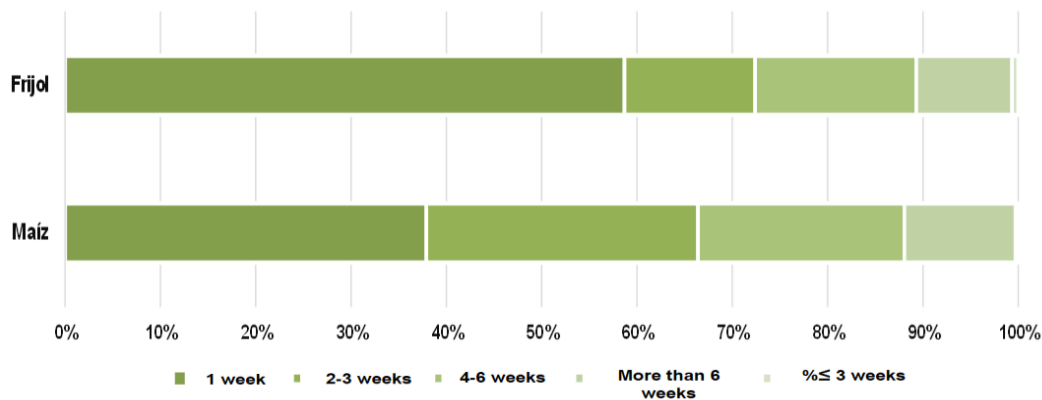
— Field observation, community of Santa Cruz, Lempira, Honduras

4.3 Availability and access to food

Basic grain reserves

Among the households that still have their own maize reserves (approximately 22,900 households reported by the communities), 64.2% indicate that these reserves will last them for three weeks or less, and only 11.3% have reserves for more than six weeks. The situation is similarly critical for beans: 58.5% of the approximately 11,300 households with reserves have them for three weeks or less.

Duration of food reserves



Grain reserves (reported households)	1 week	2-3 weeks	4-6 weeks	More than 6 weeks
Maize	8,369	6,299	4,781	2,576
Bean	5,381	1,256	1,551	921

Source: Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners.

At departmental level, Chiquimula (Guatemala) and Baja Verapaz (Guatemala) present the most critical situation, with 99.1% and 95.8% of households with maize reserves, respectively, indicating that these will last them three weeks or less—that is, practically without any cushion against the losses that have already occurred—.

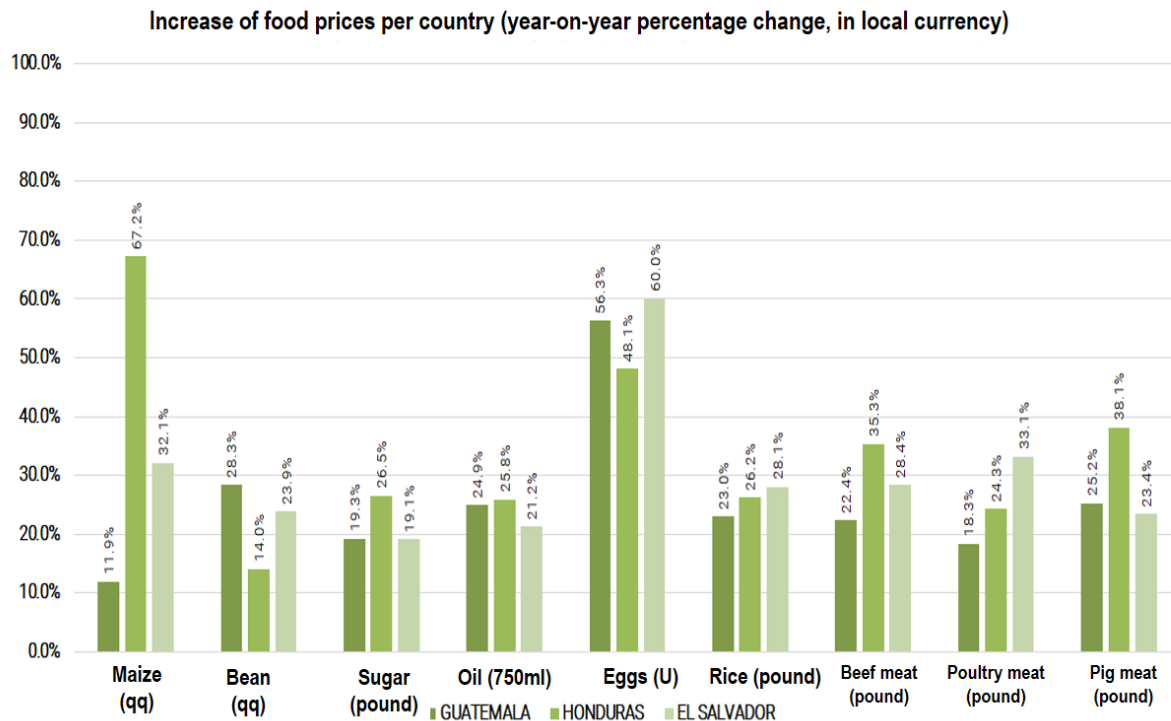
The combination of critically low reserves with severe losses in the first harvest means that a significant proportion of the households evaluated will depend on the market to cover their consumption of staple grains in the coming months, in a context of rising prices, which directly reduces their ability to afford food. Several communities in Lempira illustrate this transition from self-sufficiency to market dependence:

"In the community, they don't plant during postrera; when they do try, it's only resulted in sorghum. There are no food reserves since everything was sold last year. Households that have any reserves it's because they purchased. Due to the extreme heat, chickens and hens are dying. Remittances are no longer being received, and those who used to send them have returned to the community."

— Field observation, community of Camapara, Lempira, Honduras

Food prices

The price monitoring of the basic food basket collected as part of this assessment shows widespread increases between the periods of July-August 2025 and July-August 2026 in the three countries, with particularly pronounced variations in high protein products:



Guatemala (prices in Quetzals, GTQ)

Product	Price Jul-Aug 2025	Price Jul-Aug 2026	% increase
Maize (quintal)	203.57	227.74	11.9%
Beans (pound)	7.41	9.51	28.3%
Sugar (pound)	4.93	5.88	19.3%
750 ml bottle of oil	14.13	17.65	24.9%
Eggs (unit)	1.28	2	56.3%
Rice (pound)	5.01	6.16	23.0%
Beef (pound)	28.66	35.07	22.4%
Chicken meat (pound)	13.54	16.02	18.3%
Pork (pound)	23.18	29.03	25.2%

Honduras (prices in Lempiras, HNL)

Product	Price Jul-Aug 2025	Price Jul-Aug 2026	% increase
Maize (quintal)	618.09	1033.42	67.2%
Beans (pound)	53.26	60.74	14.0%
Sugar (pound)	12.96	16.4	26.5%
750 ml bottle of oil	41.17	51.8	25.8%
Eggs (unit)	4.03	5.97	48.1%
Rice (pound)	12.27	15.48	26.2%

Product	Price Jul-Aug 2025	Price Jul-Aug 2026	% increase
Beef (pound)	75.54	102.2	35.3%
Chicken meat (pound)	33.76	41.96	24.3%
Pork (pound)	68.79	95.01	38.1%

El Salvador (prices in US dollars, USD)

Product	Price Jul-Aug 2025	Price Jul-Aug 2026	% increase
Maize (quintal)	23.89	31.55	32.1%
Beans (pound)	1.09	1.35	23.9%
Sugar (pound)	3.19	3.8	19.1%
750 ml bottle of oil	1.93	2.34	21.2%
Eggs (unit)	0.15	0.24	60.0%
Rice (pound)	0.57	0.73	28.1%
Beef (pound)	3.98	5.11	28.4%
Chicken meat (pound)	1.57	2.09	33.1%
Pork (pound)	2.86	3.53	23.4%

Source: Local market monitoring collected as part of the Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners. Currencies are not directly comparable in nominal terms between countries; the year-on-year percentage change is highlighted as a comparable indicator of inflationary pressure on each national basket.

In all three countries, eggs, sugar, and meat showed some of the largest percentage increases, particularly affecting the nutritional quality of household diets—consistent with the recurring qualitative demand for "foods of better nutritional quality" identified in section 4.10 on prioritizing needs. Maize, the staple food of the rural economy, registered the largest percentage increase in Honduras (+67.2%), followed by El Salvador (+32.1%) and Guatemala (+11.9%), a pattern that coincides with the relative severity of crop losses reported in each country (section 6).

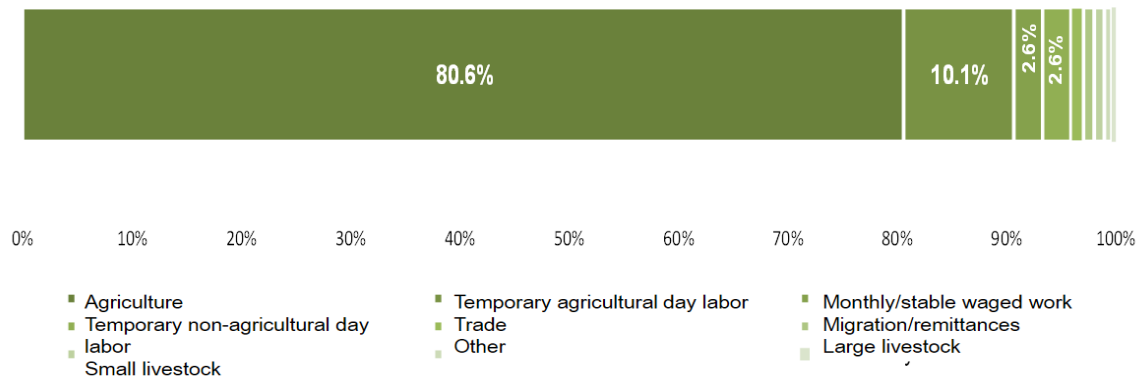
A relevant qualitative finding is the replacement of products in the food basket by some communities: in several localities of Lempira, the field teams had to substitute vegetable oil with lard in the price monitoring, because that is the fatty product that households actually consume and buy—an indirect sign of simplification of the diet towards cheaper products and of lower nutritional quality.

"The bus fare from the community to Texiguat cost 30 lempiras in 2025 and it costs 50 lempiras in 2026."
— Field observation, community of Santa Lucía, El Paraíso, Honduras

4.4 Livelihoods and loss of income

Agriculture is the primary source of income for approximately 72,000 households (80.6% of the total classified), followed at a distance by seasonal agricultural work (approximately 9,000 households, 10.1%) and monthly or stable paid employment (approximately 2,300 households). This very high concentration—more than four out of every five households depend directly on subsistence farming or agricultural work, both activities are directly impacted by the drought—explains why the magnitude of the economic impact documented in this assessment is so widespread: for the vast majority of households, there is no alternative, non-climate-dependent source of income to which they can turn.

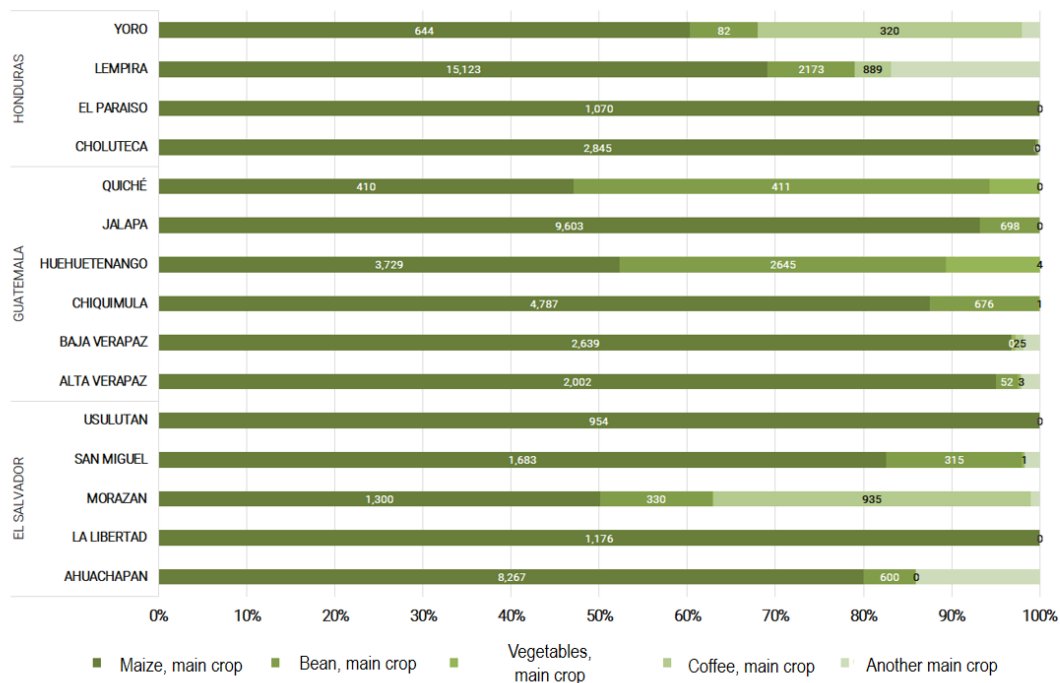
Main livelihoods of households in the communities evaluated



According to the focus groups, the estimated cultivated area in the communities evaluated is 94,799 manzanas for the "first" growing season, in which maize is the main crop with 57,738 manzanas (60.9%; n=57,738), considering both primary and secondary crops, followed by beans with 20,140 manzanas (21.2%; n=20,140). Other crops represent 9,513 manzanas (10.0%; n=9,513), while coffee reaches 6,311 manzanas (6.7%; n=6,311) and vegetables 1,097 manzanas (1.2%; n=1,097).

These results demonstrate a marked predominance of staple grains in the production systems of the territories evaluated, particularly maize, which accounts for more than three-fifths of the total cultivated area. At territorial level, Lempira (Honduras) stands out with the largest reported agricultural area and significant crop diversification, as well as Jalapa, Chiquimula, and Huehuetenango (Guatemala) and Ahuachapán (El Salvador), departments that concentrate extensive areas primarily dedicated to the production of maize and beans, essential crops for food security and rural livelihoods.

CROP AREA FOR THE FIRST CYCLE (MANZANAS)

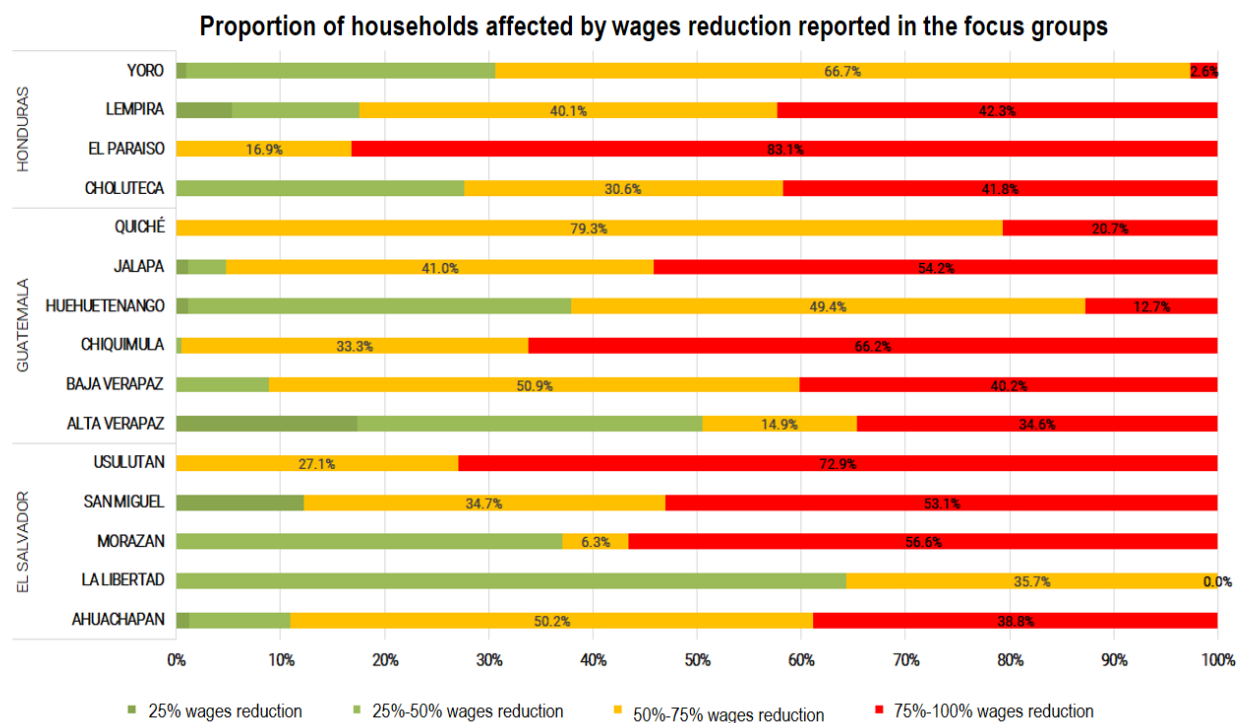


Focus groups estimate that approximately 55,000 households, representing about 60% of all households in the communities evaluated, are experiencing a decrease in the availability of day labor (temporary paid work) compared to previous years. Of these, 45.3% reported a drop of between 75% and 100% in the availability of day labor, and an additional 37.3% reported a drop of between 50% and 75%. Overall, 82.5% of the affected households are facing a severe reduction (50% or more) in their income from day labor, the main source of supplementary monetary income to subsistence farming in the region.

This double impact — loss of one's own harvest and simultaneous loss of other people's wages — is the most dangerous combination from the point of view of food security, because it simultaneously eliminates the two main sources of access to food for a rural household: its own production and purchasing power.

Reduction of labor days	50-75% reduction	75-100% reduction	Total with reduction ≥50%
Households affected (# / %)	21,137 (37.3%)	25,657 (45.3%)	46,794 (82.5%)

Source: Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners.



"Day labor has decreased due to land access restrictions in the community; the company that hires temporary workers has reduced its hiring of local staff. They invested their reserves in the first harvest and lost everything due to the drought."

— Field observation, community of El Carrizal, Choluteca, Honduras

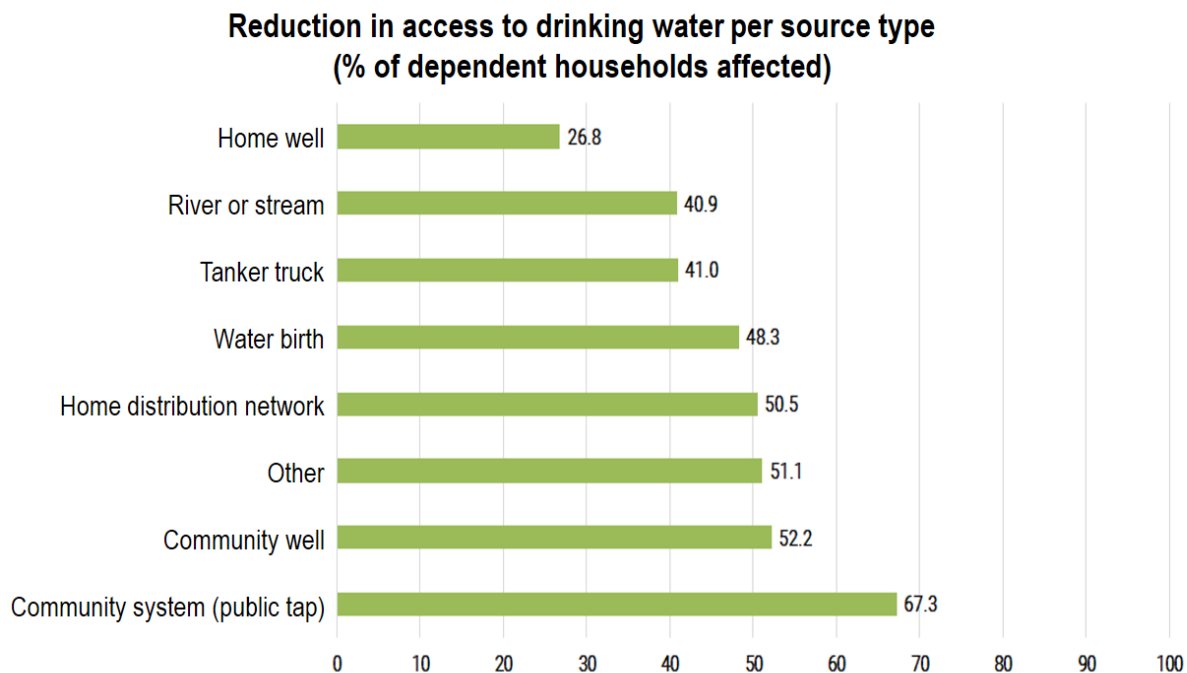
"There is no work in the community due to the drought: there is no planting, no harvesting. To be able to migrate from the community, one has to wait for the coffee harvest and the sugarcane cutting, in the months of November to March."

— Field observation (comment from the COCODE), communities of Chivaquito and Pajales, Baja Verapaz, Guatemala

This last testimonial illustrates an important dynamic for response planning: even traditional seasonal migration—the main off-season income-generating strategy in several communities in Baja Verapaz—is subject to the coffee and sugarcane harvest schedules in other regions, a schedule that does not coincide with the peak of immediate need for households (August-October). This means that, for these households, there is no income safety net available in the short term, reinforcing the need for direct assistance while they await the harvest season.

4.5 Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

Access to safe water is one of the most critical and cross-cutting issues identified by this assessment, with direct implications for human consumption, agricultural and livestock production, household hygiene and the burden of domestic work — the latter falling disproportionately on women and girls —.



Main water source	Dependent households	Households with reduced access	% with reduction
Home distribution network	46,288	23,390	50.5%
Water birth	15,152	7,317	48.3%
River or stream	8,778	3,590	40.9%
Community system (public tap)	5,444	3,664	67.3%
Community well	4,079	2,128	52.2%
Tanker trucks	2016	827	41.0%
Home well	3,927	1,054	26.8%
Other	1,745	891	51.1%

Source: Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners. Sorted by number of dependent households.

The residential water distribution network—the main source of water for approximately 46,000 households and the most widely used in the communities evaluated—exhibits reduced access in 50.5% of dependent households, meaning just over 23,000 homes with reduced or interrupted water supply. The community system (public tap) is the source with the highest relative proportion of affected water sources (67.3%), followed by the community well (52.2%). The widespread impact to practically all water sources—regardless of their nature (surface, groundwater, or piped)—

is consistent with a 2026 water crisis associated with a generalized deficit in precipitation and groundwater recharge, rather than with the isolated failure of a specific type of infrastructure.

At departmental level, Huehuetenango (Guatemala) leads the ranking of affected household water networks with 90.4% of households experiencing reduced access, followed by Choluteca (Honduras, 83.1%) and Yoro (Honduras, 79.9%). These three departments should be prioritized for immediate water provision interventions.

The database did not include a specific module on sanitation (latrines, excreta disposal) or hygiene practices, beyond access to drinking water sources. This is a significant limitation: the reduced access to water documented in this section has additional effects on hygiene practices and on the risk of diarrheal and skin diseases, particularly in childhood, which could not be directly quantified with the available data. It is recommended that future rounds of assessment incorporate a comprehensive WASH module.

“There are malnourished children who need help, as well as families who lack basic necessities and live in extreme poverty. The lack of water has prevented their crops from growing; they have to buy water since there is none in the community, but they struggle to afford it.”

— Field observation, hamlet of Chemiche, Huehuetenango, Guatemala

“Last month the community experienced a water crisis. This has led to problems with municipal authorities; the community leader has been threatened to prevent him from reporting issues related to the water service.”

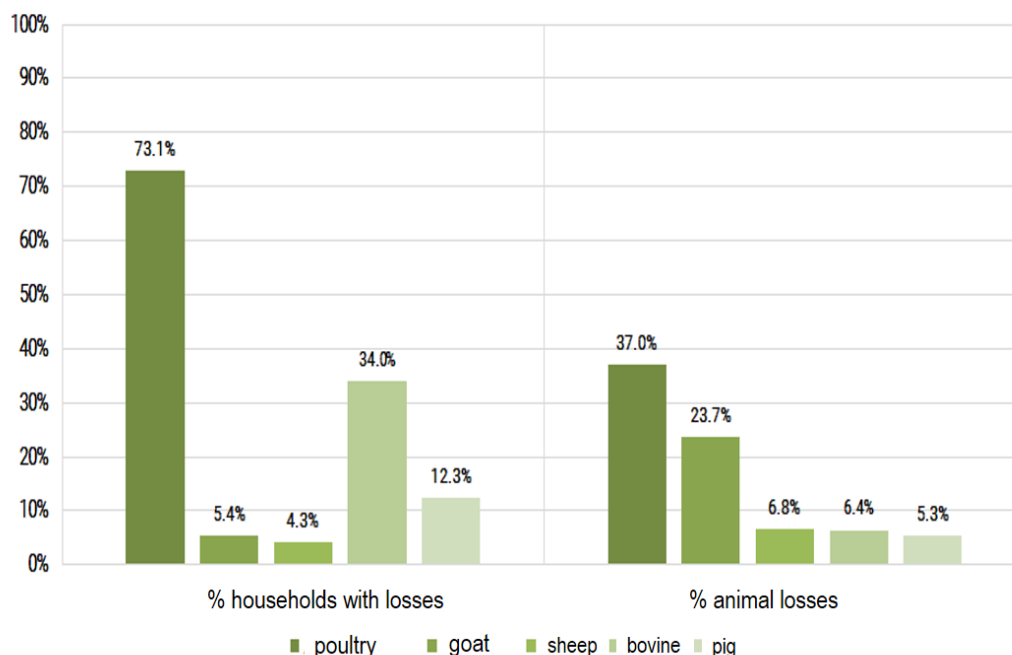
— Field observation, hamlet Cerna, El Tablón Centro, Usulután, El Salvador

This last testimonial is particularly relevant from a protection perspective: it documents that the dispute over a scarce resource —water— can lead to direct threats against community leaders, a protection risk that transcends the strictly technical scope of access to water.

4.6 Livestock losses

Backyard livestock assets constitute a traditional savings and shock-absorbing mechanism for rural households in the Dry Corridor, particularly poultry, which can be sold relatively easily in the event of a cash flow emergency. The assessment documents a severe impact on this resilience buffer:

Losses in livestock production



Species	Households with this production	Households with losses (# and %)	Total number of animals	Lost animals	% animals lost
Poultry	68,275	49,897 (73.1%)	385,388	142,574	37.0%
Bovine	4,582	1,558 (34.0%)	17,770	1,145	6.4%
Pigs	7,242	892 (12.3%)	9,541	508	5.3%
Goats	294	16 (5.4%)	367	87	23.7%
Sheep	47	2 (4.3%)	118	8	6.8%

Source: Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners.

Poultry, the main livestock asset in terms of the number of households that report it (approximately 68,300 households), also register the highest proportion of households with losses (73.1%), associated with the scarcity of water and food and mortality episodes related to heat stress —extreme heat causes direct mortality in birds and affects the fertility and gestation of cattle, as reported by several communities in Lempira—.

Cattle, an asset with higher economic value and lower liquidity, registers a lower proportion of households with losses in relative terms, but represents a greater economic loss of assets for the affected families, with possible long-term decapitalization effects that exceed the horizon of this assessment.

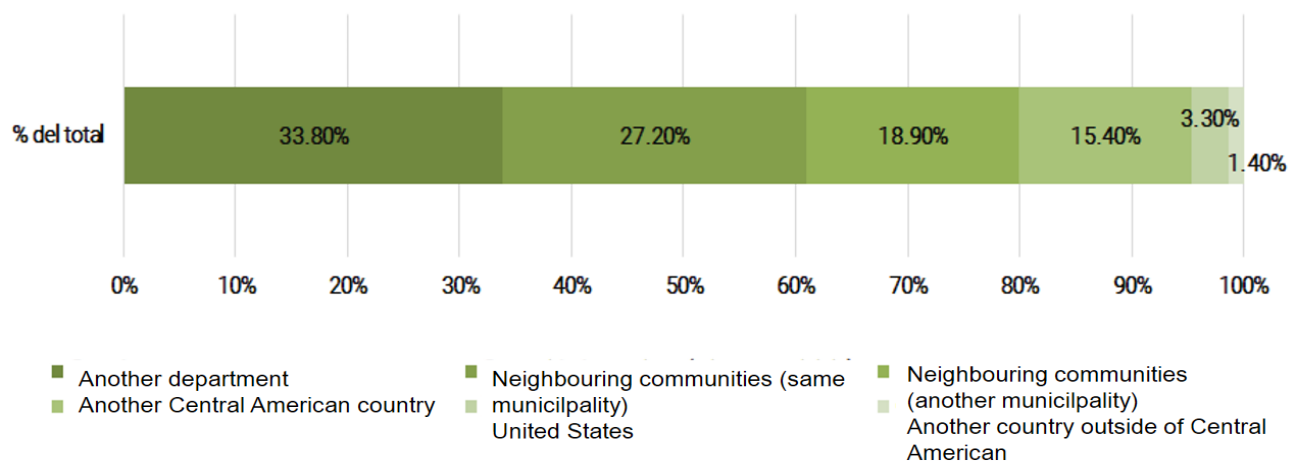
“The heat causes abortions in cows, and that also generates losses in the community. There is no migration; rather, people are returning and creating a new burden on the community in terms of water and access to resources, and the loss of remittances.”

— Field observation, community of Portillo Flor, Lempira, Honduras

4.7 Migration and human mobility

A total of 6,212 migration movements of at least one household member were reported during the three months prior to the assessment (May–July 2026). The majority of these movements were internal: 46.1% to neighboring communities within the same municipality or other municipalities in the same department, and 33.8% to other departments within the country. However, 1,251 movements (20.1%) were to another Central American country (957), the United States (204), or another country outside the region (90), suggesting that, for some households, the agricultural crisis acts as an additional factor driving migration abroad.

Migration movements per destination (May–July 2026) – Regional total



A finding that breaks the expected pattern: the return without remittances

One of the most significant qualitative findings of this assessment—and with the greatest implications for the design of the response—is that, in several communities in Lempira (Honduras), the dominant migration dynamic is not departure but return: people who had migrated in previous years are returning to their communities of origin, either voluntarily (due to job loss or insufficient income) or due to deportation, and their return does not bring remittances but one more mouth to feed in a household that already faces crop loss and water scarcity.

"In previous years, 30 people from the community were in the United States, of whom 20 have been deported this year."

— Field observation, community of Estanzuela, Lempira, Honduras

"There is no migration; rather, people are returning and creating a new burden on the community in terms of water and access to resources, and the loss of remittances."

— Field observation, community of Portillo Flor, Lempira, Honduras

"Remittances are no longer being received, and the people who used to send them have returned to the community."

— Field observation, community of Camapara, Lempira, Honduras

This pattern of return migration without remittances has a direct humanitarian implication: the response cannot assume that migration functions as an automatic income safety valve for all households. In departments where return migration predominates—apparently linked to the US immigration policy situation during 2026 rather than to the agricultural crisis itself—the pressure on local resources (water, land, food) intensifies instead of easing, and households receiving returning family members require specific support.

Female and circular migration

The assessment also documents migration patterns differentiated by gender and time period. In Choluteca (Honduras), one community reported that recent international migration consisted specifically of women, with Spain as the destination.

"The people who migrated were women, heading to Spain. Among their main needs are seeds and fertilizer, but their biggest risk factor is the lack of rain, which could continue to cause crop losses."

— Field observation, community of Tajeada, Choluteca, Honduras

Other communities in the same area report circular migration patterns—short-term seasonal movements to harvest areas within the country, with regular return—which constitute a more established and less disruptive income diversification strategy than international migration, but are equally dependent on the existence of day labor opportunities in other regions.

"Migration is circular: they go to other departments during harvest seasons and return to the community; SEDESOL delivered food bags to 29 elderly people."

— Field observation, community of San Isidro, Choluteca, Honduras

4.8 Gender

Women represented 49.9% of the participants in the focus groups, with particularly high participation in Guatemala (57.0%) compared to Honduras (47.2%) and El Salvador (39.8%). Beyond the composition of the focus groups, the assessment identifies at least three ways in which the 2026 climate crisis has a differentiated impact on women in the Dry Corridor:

- **Water management:** In rural households in the region, the collection and management of water for domestic consumption falls predominantly on women and girls. The reduced access documented in section 4.5—affecting more than 23,000 households at the main source alone—translates into a direct increase in women's unpaid workload, typically through longer distances or waiting times for water collection, a dimension that the instrument did not directly quantify but which is consistent with regional literature on gender and WASH.
- **Loss of backyard livestock assets:** Poultry—the livestock asset with the highest proportion of losses (73.1% of producing households, section 4.6)—traditionally constitutes an asset managed and controlled by women in rural Central American households, used both for self-consumption of protein and for generating emergency income. Therefore, its widespread loss represents a specific erosion of women's economic autonomy within the household.
- **Female migration:** the assessment documents at least one departmental case (Choluteca, Honduras) where recent international migration corresponded specifically to women (section 4.7), suggesting a possible feminization of crisis migration strategies in some areas, with implications for the composition and workloads of households that remain in origin (frequently headed by women, the elderly or children).

The database did not include a specific gender analysis module (e.g., disaggregated household headship, division of domestic labor, or gender-based violence), so these findings should be interpreted as reasonable lines of analysis based on the available data and not as a direct measurement. It is recommended that a comprehensive gender module be incorporated in future rounds (section 8).

4.9 Community resilience and adaptation to climate change

Despite the severity of the findings presented in the previous sections, the assessment also documents evidence of community organizational and adaptive capacity, which constitutes a basis on which to build early recovery and longer-term resilience interventions:

- **Active community leadership:** the information reported in the 354 focus groups was systematized by Community Development Councils (COCODE) and local leaders, who in several cases provided their own analysis of the causes and possible solutions to the crisis, beyond mechanically answering the questionnaire.
- **Adaptive crop diversification:** In areas where the *postrera* cycle is not traditionally viable (for example, communities in Lempira that only plant in May-June), households have developed three-level cropping patterns (maize as main, beans as secondary, sorghum or millet as a third crop with greater drought tolerance), a risk reduction strategy that predates the 2026 crisis and could be strengthened with technical support and improved seed.
- **Local climate monitoring:** at least one community (Combalí, Choluteca) reported the use of a rain gauge and a community climate monitor to accurately quantify the rainfall deficit (128 millimeters in four months), evidence of local agroclimatic monitoring capacities that could be integrated into broader early warning systems.
- **Mutual support mechanisms and local government:** several communities report occasional support from their municipalities (delivery of fertilizer or urea, even with limited resources), indicating a capacity for response at local government level that could be strengthened and complemented with additional humanitarian resources.

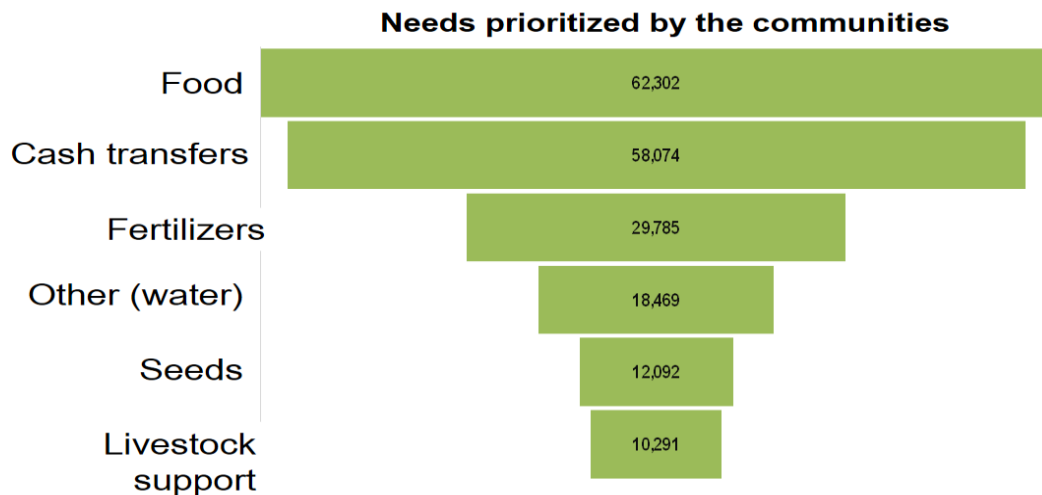
"The members of the COCODE were able to express the needs they are currently facing in their community; climate change affects all families. They appreciate the interest shown in this assessment."

— Field observation, community of Cahaboncito, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala

This local organizational and adaptive capacity is an asset that the humanitarian response must explicitly recognize and strengthen, avoiding purely welfare-based intervention models that do not invest in the capacities already present in the communities.

4.10 Assistance received and gap compared to prioritized needs

When communities were asked about their most urgent needs, nearly 62,000 households prioritized access to food, and around 58,000 prioritized cash transfers as a response mechanism, followed by fertilizers (nearly 29,800 households) and seeds (nearly 12,100 households) to sustain the *postrera* cycle.



Prioritized need (households)	Food	Seeds	Fertilizers	Livestock support	Monetary transfers	Other*
Total	62,302	12,092	29,785	10,291	58,074	18,469

*Other includes primarily drinking water, water supply, and rainwater harvesting or storage containers. Source: Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners.

The assistance reported as received from NGOs, United Nations agencies and international cooperation actors in 2026 reached approximately 5,100 households through cash transfers, around 2,300 through in-kind food, approximately 800 through food vouchers, approximately 475 through fertilizers and approximately 460 through maize seed.

This implies that the coverage of cash transfers by non-governmental actors reaches only 8.8% of households that prioritize this type of assistance, and that the coverage of maize seed reaches only 3.8% of the households that request it—evidence of a very significant gap between the expressed need and the current response in practically all categories of assistance.

The reported government assistance shows a different profile per country, mainly focused on structural social programs rather than the specific climate emergency: in Guatemala, the Education Bonus (approximately 6,600 households) and the Health Bonus (approximately 3,600 households) predominate; in El Salvador, the School Package (approximately 11,500 households), the Agricultural Package (approximately 9,400 households) and the School Feeding Program (approximately 8,000 households); and in Honduras, concentrated in the departments of Lempira and Yoro, the Productive Bonus (approximately 900 households) and the Coffee Bonus (approximately 800 households).

These programs—structural in nature and not necessarily designed as a response to the 2026 drought—do not replace the need for a specific humanitarian response aimed at compensating the crop loss and reduced access to water documented in this assessment.

"Families in the community say that both the school supply kits and the school meals are not enough to meet their needs, and that they have to pay out of their own money."

— Field observation, San Juan, hamlet El Gavilán, Ahuachapán, El Salvador

5. Food safety analysis

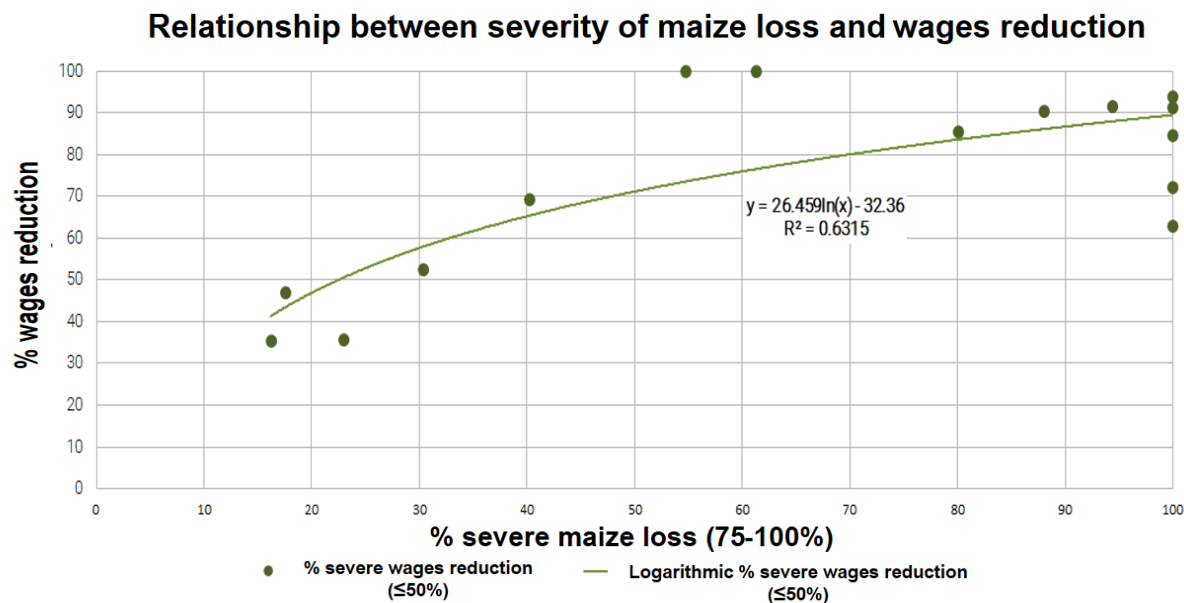
5.1 Interpretation of the results

The findings presented in the previous section should be read in an integrated manner to understand their combined effect on household food security. The assessment documents a simultaneous impact on the four pillars that support food security in rural households in the Dry Corridor: availability (loss of between 64% and 84% of maize-producing households in the severe range, depending on the country, with drought as the dominant cause), access (reserves depleted in three weeks or less for 64.2% of households with maize reserves, combined with a reduction of between 50% and 100% in the availability of day labor for most affected households, and with price increases for the basic food basket of between 11% and 85% depending on the product and country), stability (the crisis is not a one-off shock, but the culmination of a lost agricultural cycle, with the intention to plant maize in the second planting season, 62% lower than in the first, which also compromises the next harvest, and with a pattern of return migration without remittances that adds additional pressure on household resources), and probably also the biological utilization of food—aggravated by the substitution of products in the food basket towards cheaper alternatives with lower nutritional quality, and the decrease in access to safe water—a dimension that this report does not directly quantify due to limitations in the quality of the available secondary nutritional data (see section 3.4).

This simultaneous impact on all four pillars is the clearest sign that the region is facing an acute food crisis, not an ordinary production fluctuation. The observed patterns—widespread losses of maize and beans, predominantly due to drought, depleted reserves, and a drop in income from day labor—are consistent with the classification of Crisis (Phase 3) or worse that the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) that regional early warning systems had already projected for a large portion of the poorest households in the Dry Corridor between April and September 2026 [2], and suggest that, for households with crop losses exceeding 75% and without sufficient reserves or alternative income, food insecurity outcomes could approach the Emergency threshold (IPC/Phase 4) in the months of greatest seasonal scarcity (August-October), prior to the eventual *postrera* harvest.

5.2 Relationships between variables: what the cross-tabulation of indicators reveals

Beyond individual indicators, cross-referencing variables allows for the identification of association patterns between variables and risk accumulation that are not visible when observing each dimension in isolation. For example, when relating maize and bean crop losses to the reduction in agricultural wages, a strong positive correlation is observed between the severity of maize losses and the reduction in agricultural wages ($R^2=0.63$). The results suggest that the impacts on agricultural production translate directly into a decrease in rural employment opportunities. The departments with severe maize losses show reductions in workdays exceeding 80%, demonstrating a significant effect on the livelihoods of households that are dependent on seasonal agricultural work. It is important to emphasize that correlation does not necessarily imply causation.



Additionally, other relationships between indicators were found, the most relevant being:

- Geographic correlation between severe crop loss and water stress: the departments with the highest proportion of severe maize loss (Jalapa, Chiquimula in Guatemala; Choluteca, Lempira in Honduras) largely coincide with those with the greatest reduction of access to water, which is consistent with the hypothesis of a common climatic cause—the precipitation deficit— and that water and agricultural recovery interventions should be geographically coordinated in the same territories.
- Relationship between dependence on agriculture and severity of economic impact: departments where agriculture concentrates a greater proportion of the main livelihoods also tend to show the highest proportions of households with severe reduction of wage, which is consistent with the expected logic: in local economies dominated by dryland farming, when the harvest fails, the demand for local agricultural labor also contracts, doubly impacting households without their own land.
- Migration and loss of remittances as an amplifier, not as relief: in the communities of Lempira where the pattern of return migration without remittances is documented, the combination of crop loss, loss of wages and loss of remittances creates a triple drop in income that is not observed in communities where migration maintains its traditional function of income diversification.

5.3 Identified risk factors

- High dependence on dryland subsistence farming as the main means of livelihood (nearly 72,000 households, 81% of the total classified), without widespread access to irrigation systems that allow mitigating the rainfall deficit.
- Insufficient reserves of basic grains to cover the seasonal shortage period until the *postrera* harvest, increasing dependence on the market in a context of rising prices.
- A simultaneous reduction in the availability of agricultural and non-agricultural workdays, the main source of supplementary monetary income for landless households or those with insufficient landholdings. An oversupply of agricultural labor can lead to lower wages or a reduction in the number of workdays available to individuals, resulting in decreased income.
- Loss of backyard livestock assets (poultry) that reduces the ability of households —particularly women, who are usually responsible for this type of production— to generate emergency income or supplement the diet with animal protein.
- Widespread water stress that simultaneously affects human consumption, agricultural and livestock production, and household hygiene conditions.
- A decrease in the intention to plant late-season crops, which compromises the productive recovery before the next lean season, which may extend until the next harvest in (August-September 2026).
- Interruption of remittances in communities with a high incidence of return migration, which eliminates a source of income that in previous years acted as a buffer against crises.
- Significant gap between the needs prioritized by communities (particularly cash transfers and food) and the current coverage of non-governmental humanitarian assistance.
- Pre-existing structural vulnerability: rural poverty, low levels of human development and historical dependence of the Dry Corridor on food aid in drought years, which reduces the margin of operation for households to absorb a new shock without external assistance.
-

5.4 Observed Trends

- Increasing deterioration during the agricultural cycle: periods of rainfall deficit intensified throughout the first 2026 cycle, with 80.8% of communities reporting two or more prolonged dry spells, a more severe pattern than in years of moderate El Niño.
- Greater relative severity in Honduras and Guatemala: the proportion of households with maize losses in the most severe range (75-100%) is higher in Honduras (84.0%) and Guatemala (80.7%) than in El Salvador (64.1%), suggesting a difference in the intensity of the water deficit or in productive resilience between countries (see regional analysis, section 6).

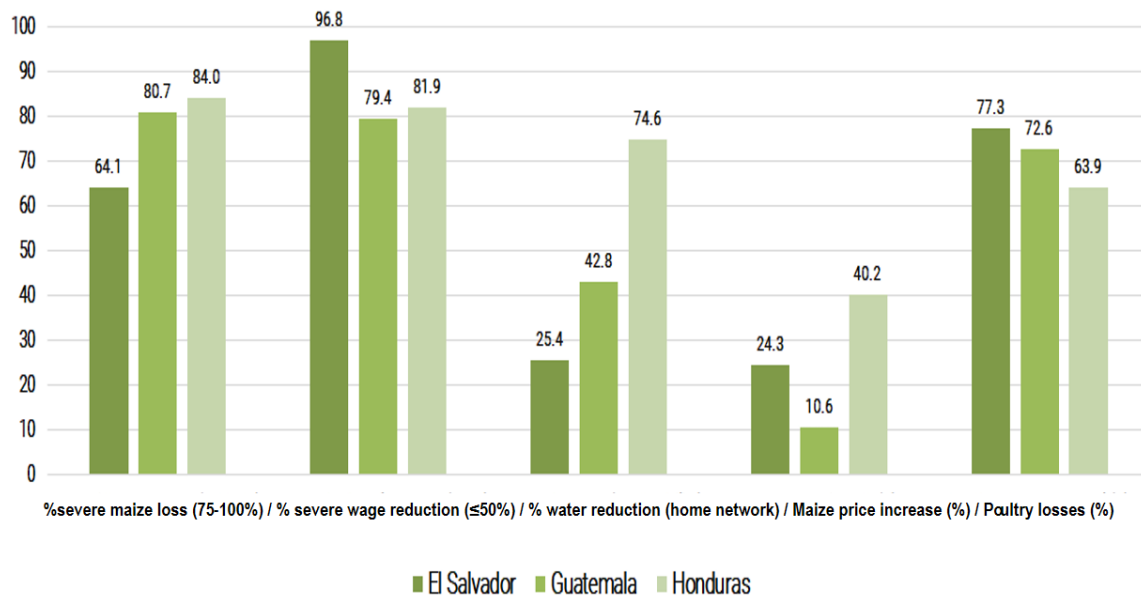
- Transition towards an economic access crisis: as physical grain reserves are depleted, the focus of the crisis shifts from the physical availability of food to the purchasing power of households, in a context of simultaneous income decline (wages, remittances) and price increases.
- Signs of productive decapitalization ahead of *postrera*: the sharp drop in the intention to plant maize for the second cycle (-62%) suggests that a significant number of households will not be able to recover their production without external support in seeds, fertilizers and working capital.
- Emergence of a "double-edged" migration pattern: traditional international migration is combined, in some areas, with a phenomenon of return migration without remittances that aggravates—instead of relieving—the pressure on community resources.



6. Comparative regional analysis

While the three countries share the climate pattern of rainfall deficit associated with El Niño 2026 and a widespread impact on maize and bean production, the assessment identifies relevant differences in the intensity and profile of the crisis between Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, with direct implications for prioritizing the response.

Indicators comparison across countries



Indicator	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras
Households with losses of maize (main crop)	13,617	36,431	20,335
% of households with maize loss in the 75-100% range	64.1%	80.7%	84.0%
% of households with severe reduction in wages (≥50%)	96.8%	79.4%	81.9%
% of households with reduced access to water (domestic network)	25.4%	42.8%	74.6%
% of households with poultry losses	89.3%	65.9%	74.2%
Maize price increase (July-August 2025 to 2026)	+32.1%	+11.9%	+67.2%
Percentage of women among focus group participants	39.8%	57.0%	47.2%

Source: Prepared by the author based on the Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners. Maize price increases are calculated in each country's local currency (USD in El Salvador, GTQ in Guatemala, HNL in Honduras) and are not directly comparable in nominal terms, only in percentage change.

6.1 Similarities between the three countries

- In all three countries, drought—and not excessive rainfall, floods, or winds—is cited as the overwhelmingly primary cause of crop loss, which is consistent with a regional climate event rather than localized impacts.
- Maize is the crop most affected in absolute and relative terms in the three countries, followed by bean, reflecting the centrality of both grains in the subsistence farming system of the Dry Corridor.
- In all three countries, the majority of households with agricultural losses fall into the most severe range (75-100% loss), and not into moderate ranges, indicating that the impact was not partial but rather a total or almost total loss of the harvest for most of the producing households.
- In all three countries, widespread increases in prices of basic foods and animal products are recorded between 2025 and 2026.
- In all three countries, communities consistently prioritize food and cash transfers as their two main needs, above other forms of in-kind assistance.

- In all three countries, poultry is the livestock asset with the highest proportion of losses, suggesting that the vulnerability of this asset—low cost but highly sensitive to heat and water stress—is a regional pattern and not just a local phenomenon.

6.2 Differences between countries

- Relative severity of maize loss: Honduras (84.0%) and Guatemala (80.7%) register a proportion of households with extreme losses (75-100%) considerably higher than El Salvador (64.1%), suggesting a more severe intensity of water deficit or a lower productive buffering capacity in the evaluated departments of Honduras and Guatemala (Lempira, Chiquimula, Jalapa, Alta Verapaz).
- Impact on access to water: Honduras has the highest proportion of households with reduced access to the home distribution network (74.6%), above to Guatemala (42.8%) and El Salvador (25.4%), indicating a comparatively more acute water crisis in the Honduran departments evaluated—consistent with the high concentration of communities evaluated in Lempira, one of the departments historically most affected by drought in the country.
- Price pressure: Maize shows the largest year-on-year price increase in Honduras (+67.2%), followed by El Salvador (+32.1%) and Guatemala (+11.9%), which, combined with the greater severity of Honduran crop losses, suggests a particularly intense pressure on economic access to food in that country.
- Impact on wages: El Salvador has the highest proportion of households with a severe reduction in wages (96.8%), almost 20 percentage points above Guatemala and Honduras, suggesting a Salvadoran rural economy particularly dependent on temporary day labor and, therefore, especially sensitive to the contraction in the demand for agricultural labor.
- Profile of government assistance: In Guatemala, conditional cash transfer programs for education and health predominate; in El Salvador, school and agricultural packages; and in Honduras, productive and coffee-growing vouchers concentrated in specific departments (Lempira and Yoro). None of these programs were specifically designed in response to the 2026 drought, highlighting the need for social protection mechanisms adapted to climate shocks in all three countries.
- Gender composition of focus groups: women participation was considerably higher in Guatemala (57.0%) than in El Salvador (39.8%) and Honduras (47.2%), a difference that may reflect both different dynamics of community leadership and different criteria for convening in each country.

6.3 Consolidated departmental rankings

The following table consolidates the four indicators of greatest humanitarian relevance of this assessment for the territories of the 15 departments evaluated, allowing an integrated territorial reading for the geographical prioritization of the response in the area analyzed (see also section 8, recommendations).

Department	Country	% severe maize loss	% severe reduction in wages	% losses of poultry	% increase in the price of maize	Composite Index	Priority
Choluteca	Honduras	99.96%	64.81%	79.93%	72.29%	85.83	Very high
El Paraíso	Honduras	100.00%	85.99%	48.83%	54.45%	85.20	Very high
Morazán	El Salvador	100.00%	56.60%	54.37%	63.95%	80.28	Very high
San Miguel	El Salvador	100.00%	50.99%	32.35%	37.71%	75.52	Very high
Chiquimula	Guatemala	97.55%	64.09%	19.69%	77.99%	75.28	Very high
Jalapa	Guatemala	99.96%	58.31%	17.74%	49.49%	74.92	Very high
Baja Verapaz	Guatemala	86.83%	40.67%	16.44%	60.98%	63.46	High
Lempira	Honduras	75.81%	29.26%	69.96%	73.69%	62.75	High
Usulután	El Salvador	61.33%	72.94%	51.52%	100.00%	60.37	High
Ahuachapán	El Salvador	52.86%	32.67%	32.16%	98.04%	44.30	Average
Quiché	Guatemala	53.52%	20.66%	23.94%	95.84%	41.03	Average
Alta Verapaz	Guatemala	38.95%	29.71%	17.34%	71.00%	32.80	Low

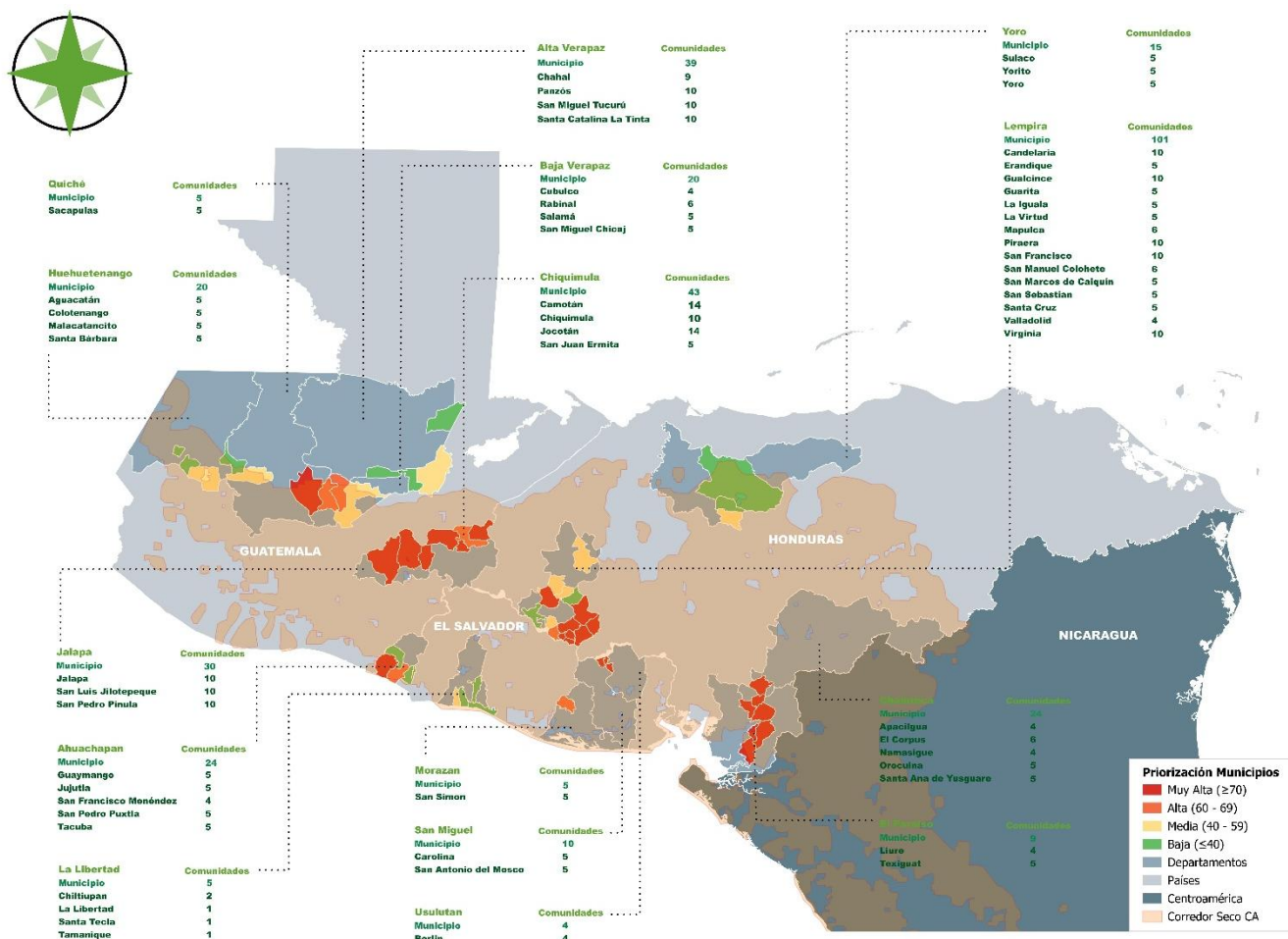
Department	Country	% severe maize loss	% severe reduction in wages	% losses of poultry	% increase in the price of maize	Composite Index	Priority
Huehuetenango	Guatemala	40.85%	14.51%	11.36%	91.87%	30.26	Low
Yoro	Honduras	29.09%	3.13%	68.41%	0.00%	28.34	Low
La Libertad	El Salvador	18.12%	0.00%	27.83%	68.68%	15.90	Low

Source: Prepared by the author based on the Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners. "Priority" is a composite index built from a weighting of four indicators: $\text{Index} = (\text{Loss of maize} \times 0.60) + (\text{Reduction of wages} \times 0.20) + (\text{Increase in the price of maize} \times 0.15) + (\text{Loss of poultry} \times 0.05)$, the priority categories are: Very High (greater than 70), High (60-70), Medium (40-59) and Low (Less than 40). The index is an internal prioritization tool and not an official measure of humanitarian severity.

The Composite Index, constructed by weighting the percentages of households with severe maize losses, severe reductions in daily wages, increased maize prices, and poultry losses, identifies six departments with very high priority for humanitarian response: Choluteca (85.83), El Paraíso (85.20), Morazán (80.28), San Miguel (75.52), Chiquimula (75.28), and Jalapa (74.92). These territories concentrate the greatest agricultural losses, income reductions, and pressures on access to food.

The most extreme levels of maize loss are observed in El Paraíso, Morazán, San Miguel, Choluteca, Jalapa, and Chiquimula, where severe losses reach or approach 100% of affected households. Likewise, the largest increases in maize prices are observed in Quiché (95.84%), Huehuetenango (91.87%), Chiquimula (77.99%), Lempira (73.69%), and Choluteca (72.29%).

Baja Verapaz (63.46), Lempira (62.75), and Usulután (60.37) are the departments with high priority, reflecting a combination of severe agricultural losses, deteriorating livelihoods, and significant increases in food prices. Ahuachapán (44.30) and Quiché (41.03) are in the medium priority group, where significant impacts persist across different indicators. Finally, Alta Verapaz (32.80), Huehuetenango (30.26), Yoro (28.34), and La Libertad (15.90) are classified as having low priority, although they maintain relevant vulnerabilities associated with agricultural losses, damage to livestock assets, or price increases.



6.4 Humanitarian coverage and financing gaps in the Central American Dry Corridor

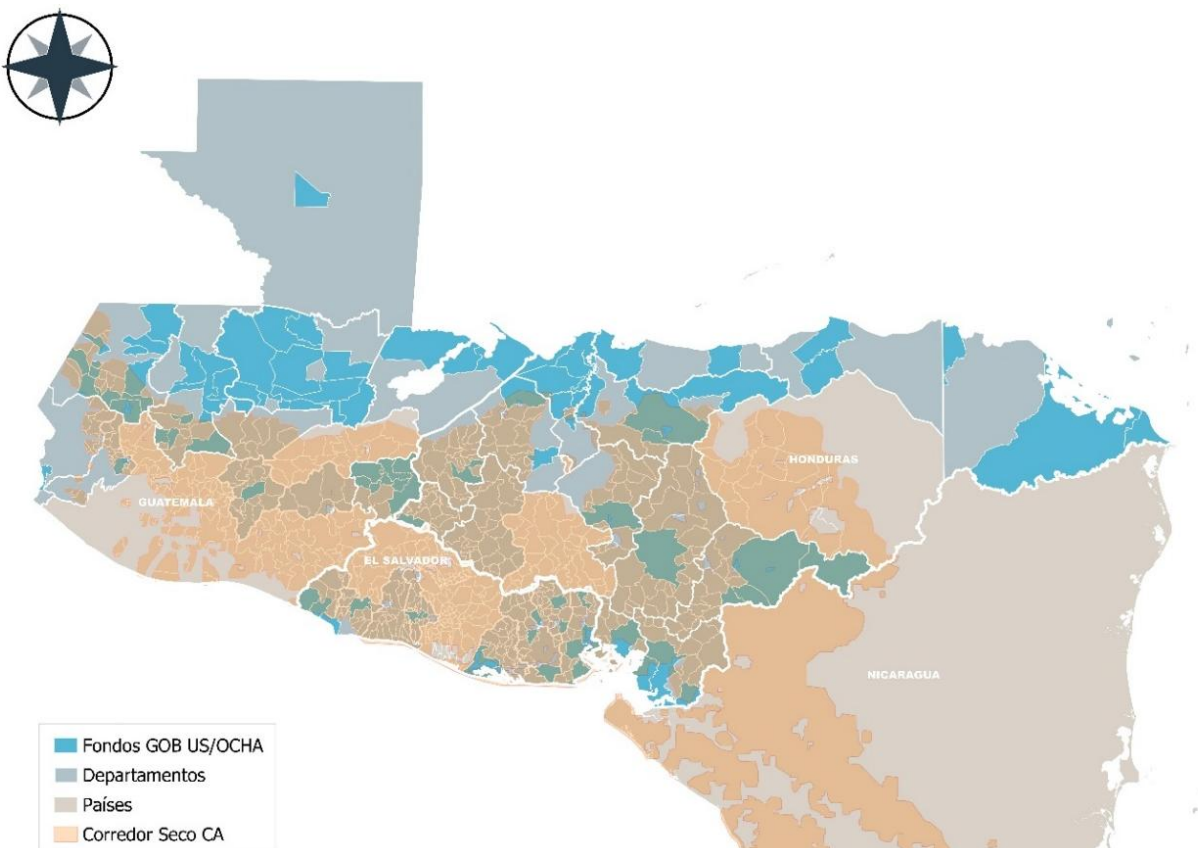
The most significant allocation of humanitarian funding destined for Central America in 2026 amounted to approximately US\$150 million (US\$60 million for Guatemala, US\$65 million for Honduras and US\$25 million for El Salvador) [9], that were channeled primarily through financing mechanisms managed by OCHA (the Regional Humanitarian Pooled Fund for Latin America and the Caribbean -RHPF LAC- and the Central Emergency Response Fund -CERF-). While these resources were allocated before the full impacts of the 2026 El Niño phenomenon materialized, and therefore, their geographic prioritization did not reflect the areas ultimately most affected by this crisis, the volume of resources involved and their potential to mitigate the deterioration of food security justify an analysis of their alignment with current needs.

In this context, the analysis of the geographical coverage of USG/OCHA humanitarian funds [10] reveals a significant gap between the territorial distribution of the Central American Dry Corridor and the areas currently receiving international support. While the Expanded Dry Corridor comprises 160 municipalities in Guatemala, 144 municipalities in Honduras, and 114 municipalities in El Salvador [11] the funds analyzed reach only 49 municipalities in Guatemala (30.6%), 33 municipalities in Honduras (22.9%), and 18 municipalities in El Salvador (15.8%). As result, 111 municipalities in Guatemala, 111 municipalities in Honduras, and 96 municipalities in El Salvador remain outside the coverage, equivalent to 69.4%, 77.1%, and 84.2% of the municipalities in each country, respectively.

In regional terms, the Expanded Dry Corridor encompasses 418 municipalities, of which only 100 (23.9%) have received coverage from the analyzed USG/OCHA funds. This means that 318 municipalities, equivalent to 76.1% of the prioritized territory, remain without direct coverage from these financing mechanisms, highlighting a significant territorial gap between the distribution of humanitarian assistance and the geography of the food crisis being generated by El Niño phenomenon in Central America.

This limited correlation between the areas with the highest levels of vulnerability, and the resources distribution aligns with the findings of the Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA). Indeed, focus groups reported that only 8.9% of households have received any type of assistance from international non-governmental organizations or United Nations agencies, suggesting an insufficient humanitarian presence given the magnitude and territorial extent of the crisis.

The findings highlight the need to review geographical prioritization criteria and strengthen resource allocation to municipalities in the Dry Corridor that have higher levels of exposure to climate risk and lower levels of humanitarian coverage, in order to reduce the existing gaps between identified needs and the currently funded response.



7. Conclusions

- The 2026 El Niño phenomenon has generated a regional food crisis in the Dry Corridor, with widespread and severe losses of the first-season of maize and bean crops, and drought as the predominant cause. The window for action before the *postrera* planting closes in the next three months.
- The crisis simultaneously affects food availability, economic access and livelihood stability, and probably also the biological utilization of food, which distinguishes it from an ordinary production fluctuation and justifies a specific humanitarian response, not just structural development programs.
- The impact goes beyond food security: more than 23,000 households report reduced access to water from their main source, 73% of poultry households report losses, and a worrying pattern of return migration without remittances persists, intensifying—rather than alleviating—the pressure on local resources.
- Households' coping capacity is practically exhausted: basic grain reserves were consumed in the short term, simultaneous loss of income from day labor, loss of livestock assets, and an intention to plant in the second planting season far below what was planted in the first.
- There is a significant gap between the needs prioritized by communities —food and cash transfers— and the current coverage of non-governmental humanitarian assistance, which reaches only 8.8% of households requiring transfers.
- The intensity of the crisis varies per each country: Honduras and Guatemala are experiencing the greatest crop losses and disruptions to water access; El Salvador has the greatest impact on daily wages. This needs a differentiated response for each country, not a uniform approach for all municipalities.
- The assessment also documents community capacities for organization and adaptation—local leadership, agroecological diversification, community climate monitoring—which constitute a concrete basis for an early recovery response and not just immediate assistance.
- Current humanitarian coverage is insufficient due to the magnitude of the crisis. Of the 418 municipalities that make up the Expanded Dry Corridor in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, only 100 (23.9%) have USG/OCHA funding coverage, leaving 76.1% of the prioritized territory without direct assistance. This gap aligns with the assessment findings, which showed that only 8.8% of households reported receiving humanitarian assistance from either NGOs or UN agencies, highlighting the need to expand coverage and target resources to the most affected areas.
- Without a timely and sufficiently large-scale response in the next three months, the crisis is likely to also compromise the *postrera* cycle and escalate into more severe phases of food insecurity in the most severely affected departments.

What is at risk, if no action is taken?

Without a timely and sufficiently large-scale response in the coming months, households in the Dry Corridor face a concrete risk of cumulative deterioration in five dimensions:

- *Decapitalization*: forced sale of livestock assets and, eventually, land or cattle, with a recovery capacity that may take several years even under normal rainfall.
- *Nutritional impairment*: greater exposure of children to diets of lower quality and quantity within a context where the assessment failed to generate robust primary evidence on nutritional status.
- *Erosion of community resilience*: weakening of the organizational capacities, agroecological adaptation and local climate monitoring already documented in this assessment, if they do not receive timely technical and financial support.
- *Forced migration*: intensification of international migration as a last resort strategy, in a context where the pattern of return without remittances is already adding pressure on local resources.
- *Loss of a second harvest*: Without timely inputs for the second planting season, households will also miss the 2026 window of productive recovery, prolonging the crisis until the first harvest of 2027 (August-September). Climate forecasts from Central American meteorological services predict that the rainfall deficit will persist throughout the rest of August and September. If this scenario is materialized and a failed agricultural cycle in *postrera* occurs, the food situation will worsen even further.

8. Differentiated strategic recommendations

The following recommendations are organized by actors and in order of priority, based on the gap identified between the needs expressed by communities and the currently available response (section 4.10), and on the departmental severity ranking (section 6.3). It is recommended that these recommendations be coordinated with national risk management mechanisms, the Central American Integration System (SICA), and the humanitarian and food security coordination groups (Food Security and Nutrition cluster) active in each country.

8.1 National Governments

- Declare or maintain an active drought alert and expand the geographic coverage of anticipatory action mechanisms and emergency food assistance to the nine highest priority departments identified in this assessment (El Paraíso, Choluteca, and Lempira in Honduras; San Miguel, Usulután, and Morazán in El Salvador; Chiquimula, Jalapa, and Baja Verapaz in Guatemala). It is important to extend this analysis to the rest of the expanded dry corridor and other areas that have experienced similar levels of rainfall deficit.
- Adapt and expand existing social programs (bonuses, school and agricultural packages) to incorporate a specific component for responding to the 2026 drought, by prioritizing households with crop loss greater than 75% and without access to other sources of income.
- Enable or expand emergency cash transfer mechanisms, given the gap identified between the demand for this type of assistance (approximately 58,000 households) and the current coverage (8.8%).
- Ensure the provision of safe water through tanker trucks and the rehabilitation of community water systems in areas with the greatest reported reduction in access, particularly in Honduras.
- Strengthen and expand the coverage of nutritional surveillance systems in communities without an active health promoter, given that this assessment did not allow for the generation of robust primary evidence on the nutritional status of children (see methodological limitations, section 3.4).
- Facilitate access to certified maize and bean seed, fertilizers and technical assistance for the *postrera* cycle, in order to reverse the projected drop in planting intentions, within the available agroclimatic window (section 8.4).
- Investigate and follow up on reports of threats against community leaders linked to the management of scarce resources (section 4.5) by strengthening local mechanisms for resolving water conflicts.

8.2 United Nations System

- Update and disseminate in a timely manner the IPC/CPI analysis for the Dry Corridor of the three countries, incorporating the findings of this assessment and other recent field evaluations, to guide the geographical prioritization of the joint response.
- Strengthen intersectoral coordination (food security, nutrition, WASH, livelihoods and protection) through cluster mechanisms or active sectoral groups in each country, avoiding duplication of efforts and promoting coverage of communities with less presence of humanitarian actors.
- Support the mobilization of financing through anticipatory action mechanisms and emergency pooled funds (e.g., CERF), given the previous experience of activating such mechanisms in the Dry Corridor of Guatemala to improve a more adequate coverage of current needs.
- Promote the exchange of information between national risk management systems, SICA and regional climate and food security monitoring bodies (FEWS NET, IPC/CPI), to anticipate the evolution of the crisis during the *postrera* cycle and the 2027 rainy season.
- To provide technical support to national Governments in the design of adaptive social protection mechanisms (shock-responsive social protection) that allow existing social programs to be automatically scaled up in response to recurring climate events such as El Niño.
- Explicitly incorporate the pattern of return migration without remittances documented in this assessment (section 4.7) into the human mobility and displacement analyses carried out by IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF in the region, given that it constitutes an emerging and poorly documented risk factor in the existing literature.

8.3 International donors

- To finance the response to the Dry Corridor crisis in a timely and flexible manner by prioritizing instruments for rapid disbursement (anticipatory action and emergency response funds) given the seasonal nature and critical window of the crisis: the next three months are crucial for the assistance in seeds and inputs to arrive in time for the *postrera* planting (section 8.4).
- Prioritize the financing of multipurpose cash transfers and immediate coverage food assistance, given the magnitude of the gap identified between the demand and the current coverage of this type of assistance.
- Secure financing with a medium-term vision (6 to 12 months) that allows the transition from emergency assistance to the recovery of agricultural and livestock livelihoods, avoiding an abrupt interruption of support before households recover their productive capacity.
- Support the strengthening of national nutrition surveillance and food price monitoring systems, as a basis for decision-making on the response and for the ICF/CPI classification in the coming months.
- Fund the incorporation of modules missing from the current instrument (coping and debt strategies, gender, protection, full WASH; section 3.4) in the next rounds of assessment, to close the evidence gaps identified in this report.

8.4 International humanitarian organizations

- Scale up food assistance and multipurpose cash transfers in communities with the most severe crop loss and the lowest current assistance coverage, prioritizing cash modalities when adequate market conditions exist, in line with the preference expressed by the communities.
- Implement programs for the protection and recovery of agricultural and livestock livelihoods (distribution of seeds, veterinary supplies, replacement of poultry) focused on the *postrera* cycle, with special attention to households led by women and backyard assets managed by women.
- Support access to safe drinking water by combining short-term solutions (distribution and storage) and medium-term solutions (rehabilitation of community sources), in coordination with local water authorities, prioritizing departments with the greatest reduction in access (section 4.5).
- Incorporate a standardized coping strategies (CSI), debt, and protection module into the next rounds of monitoring to more accurately measure the depth of livelihood deterioration and protection risks.
- Strengthen the psychosocial support and protection components, particularly for households with total crop loss, returned migrant population without remittances, and groups identified as vulnerable (children, elderly people).
- Establish a second round of monitoring within 8 to 12 weeks, paying special attention to the development of the *postrera* cycle, the evolution of food prices and the state of food security of households, in order to adjust the geographical and sectoral prioritization of the response in a timely manner.

8.5 Local organizations and partner organizations

- Strengthen the role of Community Development Councils (COCODE) and local leaders as the gateway for the humanitarian response, capitalizing on the organizational capacity already documented in section 4.9.
- To serve as a bridge to access communities that are logistically difficult to reach —particularly in Lempira, where more than a quarter of the evaluated communities are concentrated—, taking advantage of territorial knowledge and community trust already built.
- Support the ongoing identification of cases of acute malnutrition in communities without an active health promoter, by training community leaders in basic detection of signs of child nutritional risk.
- Systematically document the agroecological adaptation strategies already present in the communities (crop diversification, local climate monitoring) for scaling up with technical and input support.
- Maintain and strengthen community feedback channels (such as the observation field used in this assessment) that allow capturing critical qualitative information not anticipated by standardized quantitative instruments.

8.6 Institutions for agriculture and adaptation to climate change

- Prioritize the distribution of maize and bean seeds of short-cycle varieties with greater drought tolerance for the 2026 *postrera* cycle, given the narrow margin of time available before closing the planting window.

- To evaluate the technical feasibility of low-cost supplemental irrigation systems (rainwater harvesting, micro-irrigation) in the departments with the greatest water severity, as a medium-term risk reduction measure against future El Niño events.
- To provide technical support for crops diversification towards more drought-tolerant species (sorghum/maize, already present as a third crop in some communities of Lempira) through technical assistance and provision of improved seed.
- Strengthen the already identified community agroclimatic monitoring capacities (e.g., the use of local rain gauges in Choluteca) by integrating them into national and regional early warning systems.
- Explore agricultural insurance and livestock asset protection mechanisms (insurance indexed to climate variables, livestock contingency funds) that can be automatically activated in the event of severe drought, reducing the need for reactive humanitarian response in future El Niño episodes.
- Integrate the findings of this assessment into existing anticipatory action frameworks in the region (such as that of Chiquimula, Guatemala), evaluating their possible extension to the other high-priority departments identified in section 6.3.



Annex 1. Geographical coverage and main indicators per department

The following tables present the complete details per department, of the main indicators used in the analysis of this report: the communities evaluated, participants, households with losses of maize and bean, and households with reduced access to the domestic water distribution network.

Department	Country	Communities	Participants	Households with maize loss	Households with bean loss
Ahuachapán	El Salvador	24	367	8,007	1,738
La Libertad	El Salvador	5	57	872	0
Morazán	El Salvador	5	83	1,712	455
San Miguel	El Salvador	10	162	1,332	612
Usulután	El Salvador	4	59	931	0
Alta Verapaz	Guatemala	39	384	4,065	285
Baja Verapaz	Guatemala	20	203	3,792	0
Chiquimula	Guatemala	43	539	12,454	851
Huehuetenango	Guatemala	20	174	2,764	2,659
Jalapa	Guatemala	30	372	13,076	2,245
Quiché	Guatemala	5	62	1,077	1,076
Choluteca	Honduras	24	307	4,279	557
El Paraíso	Honduras	9	97	988	158
Lempira	Honduras	101	1,219	14,419	3,273
Yoro	Honduras	15	175	574	465

Source: Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners.

Additional indicators per department

Department	Country	Reduced access to water (domestic network)	Migration movements (3 months)
Ahuachapán	El Salvador	1,224 out of 4,962 (24.7%)	570
La Libertad	El Salvador	210 out of 526 (39.9%)	0
Morazán	El Salvador	300 out of 1,805 (16.6%)	0
San Miguel	El Salvador	0 of 1,018 (0.0%)	0
Usulután	El Salvador	565 out of 725 (77.9%)	0
Alta Verapaz	Guatemala	1,219 out of 2,325 (52.4%)	966
Baja Verapaz	Guatemala	1,708 out of 3,461 (49.3%)	983
Chiquimula	Guatemala	1,476 out of 5,608 (26.3%)	1,946
Huehuetenango	Guatemala	800 out of 885 (90.4%)	97
Jalapa	Guatemala	3,810 out of 7,914 (48.1%)	0
Quiché	Guatemala	0 of 863 (0.0%)	6
Choluteca	Honduras	2,684 out of 3,229 (83.1%)	116
El Paraíso	Honduras	213 out of 354 (60.2%)	16
Lempira	Honduras	7,893 out of 11,001 (71.7%)	1,373
Yoro	Honduras	1,288 out of 1,612 (79.9%)	139

Source: Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026, OXFAM and partners.

Annex 2. Methodological note and glossary of indicators

Definitions used in this report

- Household with losses: household reported by the focus group as affected by a reduction in its harvest of the indicated crop, in any magnitude, during the first cycle of 2026.
- Loss range (25%, 25-50%, 50-75%, 75-100%): estimated proportion of the expected harvest that the household failed to produce, according to the aggregate estimate reported by the focus group.
- Grain reserves: amount of self-produced maize or bean that the household still has at the time of the assessment (August 2026), expressed in the estimated time that will allow it to cover its consumption.
- Reduced access to water: household that reports a decrease in the flow, availability or frequency of access to its main water source, compared to a year without rainfall deficit.
- First/*postrera* growing season: the two annual agricultural cycles of the Central American calendar. The first is planted between April and May with the first rains and harvested between August and September; *postrera* is planted between August and September and harvested between November and December.
- Rain deficit period ("heat wave" or "midsummer drought"): period within the first agricultural cycle in which rainfall is interrupted or markedly reduced, affecting crop development.
- IPC/CPI (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification): an international standard that classifies the severity of acute food insecurity into five phases, from Minimal (Phase 1) to Famine (Phase 5).

Sources of quantitative data

All quantitative figures presented in sections 3 to 8 of this report, unless expressly stated otherwise, are derived from the "Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026" field database compiled by Oxfam, partner organizations, and Action Against Hunger between July and August 2026 through 354 community focus groups in 15 departments of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. The data file was processed and verified by the Oxfam Central America analysis team in order to prepare this report, including the correction of a column misalignment identified while processing the tables on livelihoods, planting per crop, access to water, and livestock losses. This misalignment was corrected before the findings presented herein were produced.

Methodological note: This report was prepared using two complementary sources: (i) OXFAM's Rapid Assessment of the El Niño Phenomenon 2026 field database—including both, its quantitative indicators and its open field of qualitative field observations—, the primary source of all figures and quotations presented in sections 3 to 9; and (ii) secondary sources in the public domain cited in notes 1 to 7, used exclusively for the humanitarian and climate context section (section 2) and for the interpretation of the food security analysis (section 5.1).

The direct quotes from communities included throughout this report were transcribed from the original field notes, normalizing their capitalization where necessary to improve readability, without altering their substantive content. This document follows, in its structure and presentation standards, the format used by OXFAM in previous rapid humanitarian needs assessment reports for the region, expanded according to the specific requirements of this exercise.

Notes and references

1. Primary source of quantitative and qualitative data: OXFAM, partner organizations and Action Against Hunger. Rapid Assessment of the 2026 El Niño Phenomenon in the Dry Corridor of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Field database, July-August 2026 (354 community focus groups, 4,260 participants, 205 qualitative field observations).
2. FEWS NET. Rainfall deficit worsens in the region. Seasonal monitoring, Latin America and the Caribbean, July 2026. <https://fews.net/es/americ-latina-y-el-caribe/monitoreo-estacional/julio-2026-0>
3. FEWS NET. Update of key messages on food insecurity in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, April-November 2026 (cited in: Diario Co Latino, "Up to 249 thousand people could face food insecurity in El Salvador", May 16, 2026). <https://www.diariocolatino.com/hasta-249-mil-personas-podrian-enfrentar-inseguridad-alimentaria-en-el-salvador/> · See also FEWS NET Guatemala, Food Security Outlook, June 2026: <https://fews.net/es/latin-america-and-caribbean/guatemala/perspectiva-de-seguridad-alimentaria/junio-2026> and FEWS NET Guatemala, Key Messages Update, July 2026: <https://fews.net/es/latin-america-and-caribbean/guatemala/actualizacion-de-mensajes-clave/julio-2026>
4. FAO and WFP. Hunger hotspots: critical areas of acute food insecurity, joint report, June 2026 (cited in: Infobae, "Dry Corridor on alert: droughts due to El Niño, violence and a 59% cut in aid, push Guatemala and Honduras to the brink", June 30, 2026). <https://www.infobae.com/el-salvador/2026/06/30/corredor-seco-en-alerta-sequias-por-el-nino-violencia-y-un-recorte-del-59-de-la-ayuda-empujan-a-guatemala-y-honduras-al-limite/>
5. OCHA/United Nations Guatemala. Anticipatory Action Framework for Drought in the Dry Corridor of Guatemala (Chiquimula). <https://guatemala.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/GT%20CERF%20AA%202-pager%20OCHA.pdf>
6. FEWS NET. Honduras. Food Security Outlook, June 2026. <https://fews.net/latin-america-and-caribbean/honduras/food-security-outlook/june-2026>
7. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). Analytical framework and classification phases of acute food insecurity. <https://www.ipcinfo.org>
8. Central American Integration System (SICA). Central American Climate Forum and regional coordination mechanisms for climate phenomena. <https://www.sica.int>
9. Data taken from the Country Based Pooled Funds DATA HUB portal: Honduras: <https://cbpf.data.unocha.org/index.html> El Salvador: <https://cbpf.data.unocha.org/index.html> and Guatemala: <https://cbpf.data.unocha.org/index.html>.
9. The analysis was performed by geographic cross-referencing between the municipal coverage reported by the USG/OCHA 2026 funds and the delimitation of the Expanded Dry Corridor used by OXFAM for this assessment.
10. 114 municipalities of the expanded Dry Corridor defined by the RECLIMA program (FAO-Government of El Salvador)

