Operational Context

Nicaragua has been experiencing economic decline due to constant socio-political crisis, which continues to place it as one of the poorest countries in Latin America. Undernourishment has improved, yet the prevalence of chronic undernutrition is 17 percent and rates are higher in some regions, up to 30 percent. Additionally, obesity and malnutrition are on the rise.

Nicaragua is vulnerable to recurrent natural hazards, ranking 21st in the World Risk Report (2019). Food insecurity is closely related to poverty, frequent natural hazards and the effects of climate change. Agriculture accounts for 17 percent of the Gross Domestic Product and is the primary source of livelihoods for 90 percent of the rural population. Women farmers face higher challenges to access agricultural markets due to the persistence of structural gender inequality in terms of participation in agricultural activities, land ownership and access to farming resources in rural areas.

WFP supports the Government’s Zero Hunger efforts by strengthening national social protection programmes, fostering disaster risk reduction and food security of smallholder farmers. WFP has been present in Nicaragua since 1971.

In Numbers

USD 109.4 million in total funding requirements
219,054 people assisted

Operational Updates

- In April, WFP continued supporting the Government of Nicaragua’s emergency response following Hurricanes Eta and Iota implemented by national authorities.
- This month in coordination with the Ministry of Education (MINED) and the National System for Prevention, Mitigation and Response to Disasters (SINAPRED), WFP started distributing 64,000 take-home rations to schools in the North Caribbean Autonomous Region (RACCN), Jinotega, Nueva Segovia and Rivas, to the family members of the enrolled school children. These rations consist of a 15-day supply of oil, rice, beans, and flour or corn (depending on cultural preferences) for a total of 43 kg. This is a one-time food distribution that will continue in May for the affected families, in a critical time of the year when the most difficult season for food insecurity starts as the families are preparing for the next harvesting season in August. All packages included awareness raising material on food entitlements, gender, nutrition, COVID prevention in Spanish and Miskito. Also, 199,000 schoolchildren (48% girls) in 2,400 schools in the same geographical areas continued benefiting from two hot school meals for a total of 22,698,120 rations, the regular and the additional one part of the scaling-up of the school feeding programme. This way, it serves as a shock-responsive social protection system that can be rapidly brough to scale to meet the increase in food demands generated by these adverse events, making the schools the centre of the response. Daily meals and take-home rations are providing an integral package of support to the families, alleviating the food burden in the households while ensuring schoolchildren meet their daily nutritional requirements.
- In addition, WFP collaborated with the Nicaraguan Institute of Agricultural Technology to reinforce the national productive social protection system. Technological vouchers (Known as “bonos de recuperación de medios de vida”) have been designed to be distributed in the form of agricultural and livestock packages to 9,383 households affected by hurricanes. The purchase of seeds, agricultural tools and animals is ongoing, and its distribution will start in May. The in-kind assistance will be complemented with joint capacity strengthening activities.
- In the framework of cooperation with smallholder farmers (SHFs), WFP purchased 440 MT of beans.
from farmers organisations (FOs) benefiting 88 SHF (24 women). Similarly, WFP provided support for the purchase of machinery, contributing to modernizing and increasing the productivity of the sowing.

- Also, WFP nutrition specialist trained beneficiary smallholder farmers organizations on food security. FOs plan to replicate these trainings to promote and increase food security of members.

- Given Nicaragua’s recurrent exposure to hazards, WFP and SINAPRED updated maps indicating the areas of exposure to certain threats in communities. This timely exercise helps to provide a quicker response in case of an emergency and is crucial to prepare for the upcoming hurricane season. Also, both parties signed a Strategic Annual Plan officialising the continuation of WFP’s support to incorporate gender into the Comprehensive Risk Management processes.

- WFP and staff from the Ministry of Women (MINIM), gathered and defined a shared vision from now until 2023. Main areas of work defined: institutional capacity strengthening, mainstreaming laws and policies on gender equality and women empowerment and promoting national awareness campaigns.

**COVID-19 response**

- As of late April, Nicaragua’s Ministry of Health reported 6,898 positive COVID-19 cases and 182 fatalities. WFP continues promoting practices among beneficiaries and staff, to reduce contagion risk, including the use of digital tools to carry out workshops. Thus, WFP also supplied 2,200 schools and 1,900 SHF with hygiene and prevention kits.

**Monitoring**

- WFP applied school feeding data collection tools and methodologies to collect information on the implementation of the school feeding regular programme, scale-up and community-level data based on inputs from key informants.

**Challenges**

- The fragile infrastructure of targeted schools in some of the most remote and hard to reach areas of Nicaragua is posing storage limitations. Thus, WFP is delivering food items for the school meals in two phases. It is of utmost importance to invest in their improvement.

**Impact of Limited Funding**

- In collaboration with MINIM, WFP continues identifying activities to reduce knowledge and infrastructure gaps to incorporate gender equality and the empowerment of women in national programs to contribute to achieving zero hunger. The implementation of these activities in 2021 may require up to USD 300,000.

**Donors**

Canada, European Union, Germany, Japan, Government of Nicaragua, Luxembourg, Private Donors, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, and UN CERF.