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Baseline Evaluation of the RETOMAR Emergency Project

In response to Eta and Iota tropical storms damages in the western highlands of Guatemala, including food security, shelter, and WASH needs.

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Indicator Tracking Table

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List of Acronyms

BHA	Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance
FCS	Food Consumption Score
MPCA	Multi-purpose Cash Assistance
PCI	Project Concern International
RETOMAR	Responding to the Storm for Increased Resilience
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

1. Executive Summary

Project Concern International (PCI), a Global Communities partner, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), is implementing the Responding to the Storm for Increased Resilience project (RETOMAR) to address urgent multi-sectoral humanitarian needs, including food security, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) for 16,901 vulnerable people in 3,183 households. The project will be implemented in five municipalities of the department of Huehuetenango in the northwest of Guatemala.

RETOMAR has three objectives: i) meet participants' basic needs, including food and non-food items through provision of multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA); ii) support participants to return to acceptable living conditions by ensuring the most affected participants have access to safe, habitable, and adequate shelter, and improved settlement conditions; and, iii) improve access to safe water supply and non-food WASH items.

The project's activities include delivering MPCA through four electronic phone transfers for families to purchase food and non-food items for shelter and WASH. The cash will expedite households receiving assistance and enable them to make informed decisions about the products they will purchase according to their particular needs.

The project will also carry out assessments of community waters systems and housing in the most affected communities. PCI construction specialists will train and accompany community brigades to repair prioritized waters systems and houses with slight to moderate damage. RETOMAR will provide the brigades with quality technical support, materials, and tools. The brigades will also be trained to disseminate key messages on essential WASH practices in their communities.

PCI will also coordinate with numerous governmental and non-governmental stakeholders at the national, departmental, municipal, and local levels. All project activities integrate PCI's protection perspectives for most vulnerable groups.

The objectives of this baseline assessment are to:

1. Measure nine quantitative indicators and their disaggregation.
2. Characterize the families participating in the project.
3. Analyze qualitative referential information from key informant interviews.
4. Report the initial context of the project.
5. Formulate recommendations to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of project activities.

Among main findings, this baseline evaluation found that most of the participating households (88%) have very low monthly incomes (less than US\$130) and they reported to be unable to meet their basic needs. In addition, many of them had to reduce their WASH expenses during the emergency (71%) and do not have access to enough non-food items such as blankets, mats, and kitchen sets (74%).

The dietary diversity of most households (54%) appears to be acceptable; however, one out of five household participants report low consumption of animal protein sources. Nearly half of the households (52%) report spending the majority of their income on food, followed by health (19%).

Generally, households have access to private or public improved water sources, store water in clean containers (85%), and have soap in a handwashing station (69%). However, half (52%) of the respondents do not know at least three critical handwashing times. This is even more marked in male participants (63% male and 47% female) and implies the need for training in basic WASH practices.

Of the 650 households observed, 427 (67%) have access to at least one functioning latrine and the average number of users per latrine is 5.9.

Participants affected by the tropical storms took refuge in municipal and community shelters or in the homes of family and friends. Many families returned to their homes even though they were damaged and unfit for habitation. Municipal and local coordination with governmental and non-governmental actors on emergency response was agile and material assistance began to be received rapidly. Even so, donations of essential items appear to have been insufficient. The responses of public institutions do not seem to be effective for all of the victims. And there is insufficient evidence that the most vulnerable groups have been prioritized.

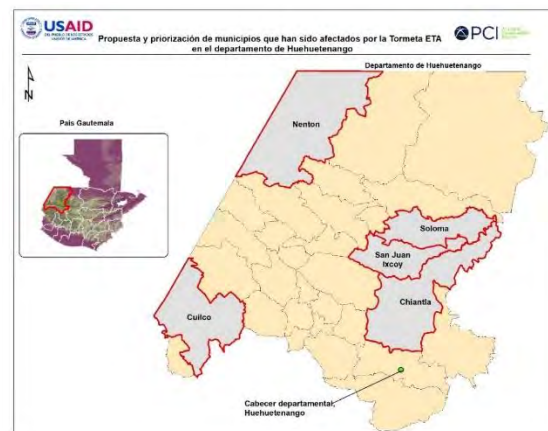
For recovery, the generalized needs are for housing and road rehabilitation, and economic reactivation. But, the lack of a national recovery plan, as well as of resources in central and municipal budgets, are factors that limit the authorities' actions in the recovery stage. The quantitative and qualitative information shows that the purposes of RETOMAR are aligned with the participants' needs for food and non-food essential items, return to acceptable living conditions, and strengthen the basic WASH practices.

2. Introduction

The baseline data collection occurred from December 2020 to January 2021 during the registration of participants. The project surveyed 3,183 heads of households (68% female respondents and 32% male), assessed 650 damaged houses, and interviewed 41 key actors and stakeholders.

The participants are from five municipalities of the department of Huehuetenango, in the northwest of Guatemala. The municipalities are Chiantla, Cuilco, Nentón, San Juan Ixcay and Soloma (see figure 1).

Figure 1 The RETOMAR project's geographical area



Source: Own elaboration

The project directly aligns with BHA's mission to save lives, alleviate human suffering, and reduce the physical, social, and economic impact of disaster by reducing the physical, social, and economic impact of the recent hurricanes in Central America and helping at-risk populations recover with dignity from these crises.

As aforementioned, RETOMAR has three strategic objectives:

1. Meet participants' basic needs, including food and non-food items, through the delivery MPCA in four telephone transfers.

2. Support participants to return to acceptable living conditions by ensuring that the most affected participants have access to safe, habitable, and adequate shelter, and improved settlement conditions. This will be achieved through housing assessments in the most affected communities and repair work through ten-person community brigades. Each brigade will support between 18 and 20 affected households.
3. Improve access to safe water supply and non-food WASH items. To this purpose, PCI will coordinate with key actors at the national, departmental, municipal, and local levels.

3. Methodology

The baseline data collection occurred in the five target municipalities (see Table 1). All participant households were surveyed at the moment of participants' registration in a census survey of the project's beneficiary population. All informants gave their consent to participate in this study. Informed consents were made based on official PCI guidelines. The selection of households participating in the project followed the criteria of housing, land, or crop damage; food insecurity; poverty, and vulnerable population.

Table 1 Number of project's participants (all were surveyed)

Municipality	Number of households	Number of people in households
Chiantla	1,104	5,680
Cuilco	1,150	5,940
Nenton	173	1,005
San Juan Ixcoy	472	2,725
San Pedro Soloma	284	1,551
Total	3,183	16,901

Source: Own elaboration

In addition, a rapid damage assessment was carried out in 650 homes in 61 communities. First, these communities were identified as the most affected, according to an official list of the National Coordinator for the Reduction of Disasters of Natural or Provoked Origin (CONRED). Subsequently, the 650 houses were identified in field visits with community leaders. Quantitative data coming from the census survey and this damage assessment were processed according to the analysis plan constructed prior to data collection.

Qualitative information was obtained through semi-structured interviews with 41 key stakeholders. Among the qualitative informants were community leaders, municipal authorities, religious leaders, private sector representatives and government representatives such as: national and municipal disaster response coordination, the Secretariat of Food and Nutrition Security and the Vice-Ministry of Infrastructure and Housing.

PCI safeguards databases, especially protecting personally identifiable information. Project personnel and anyone in touch with information have access permission levels and use individual passwords, in support of security. This report does not include information that could reveal informants' identity or specific location.

Limitations

Among limitations for this study, some people who lost their homes were not present in the target area at data collection because they were sheltered with neighbors or temporarily renting a house in another place. This may have prevented some needy families from participating in the project. Furthermore,

some people did not have identification documents because of lost or destruction and, some did not own a phone. The participants who lost their documents must replace them and RETOMAR provided mobile phones to participants who did not have any. This may delay the cashing of the first transfer.

4. Detailed Findings

In this baseline evaluation, nine outcome indicators were measured based on the quantitative processing of 3,183 participant surveys and 650 housing damage assessments. Annex 1 presents disaggregates of interest.

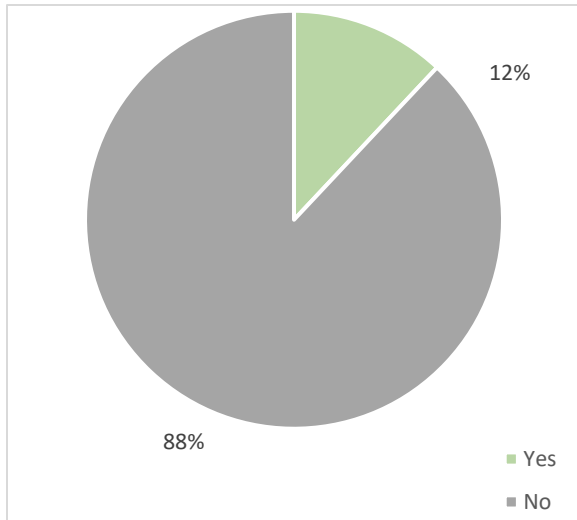
The project surveyed 3,183 heads of households (68% female and 32% male). Informants ranged from 18 to 94 years old, with an average age of 44 years, and 80% were under 60. A total of 31% identified themselves as Mayan ethnicity (the rest, as non-indigenous), 54% were literate (female: 48.1%, male: 67.9%), 95% owned a mobile phone (for cash transfers) and 73% were farmers (mainly for household consumption). The prevailing economic scenario is one of inability to meet basic household needs (73%) and unemployment (6%).

Regarding the assessed houses (N = 650), 98% are located in rural areas. A total of 96% of the families own the houses where they live, and 9% are multi-family houses. The most commonly used roofing material are aluminum/zinc sheets, and more than half of the houses (56%) have uncovered dirt floors. 92% have no boundary walls and 64% have only one or two indoor spaces. In terms of basic services, 58% have access to electric power, 61% to running water, 10% to wells, only 21% to piped sewage and 66% have latrines. The storms caused slight damage to 36% of the homes, moderate damage to 39% and severe damage to 25%. The most frequently observed damage is cracking in walls and floors, and ground subsidence.

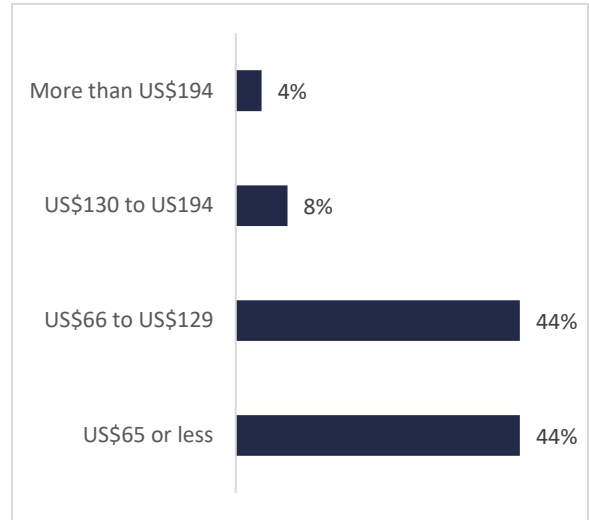
4.1. Indicator 2: Percent of (beneficiary) households who report being able to meet the basic needs of their households (all/most/some/none), according to their priorities. BHA: M2. Baseline value: 12%.

Of 3,183 participants surveyed, only 382 (12%) reported being able to meet their own and their family's basic needs (see Graph 1). This reveals that approximately 9 out of 10 households are experiencing economic limitations. The average monthly income for participant households is US\$92. The vast majority of families (88%) participating in RETOMAR have monthly income below US\$130. Graph 2 presents the distribution of households by average monthly income range. The exchange rate used is 7.74 Guatemalan quetzals per 1 U.S. dollar (this is the average reported by the Bank of Guatemala for 2020). The households reported to prioritize their spending in food (52%) and health (19%).

Graph 2 Percentage of households who report being able to meet their basic needs



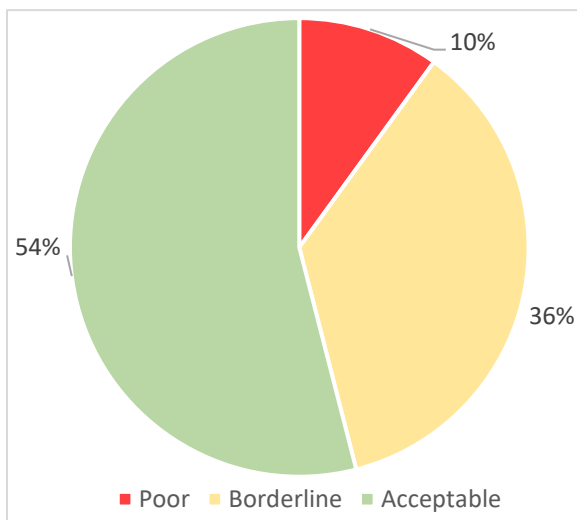
Graph 1 Percentage of households by average monthly income



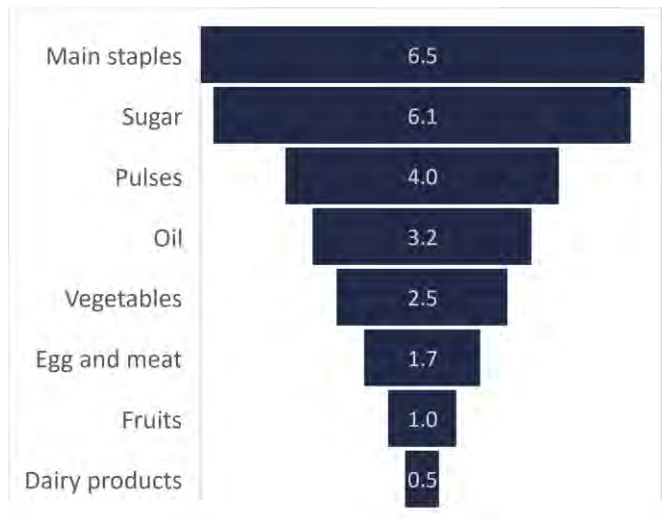
4.2. Indicator 4: Percent of (beneficiary) households by Food Consumption Score (FCS) phase. BHA: FS1. Baseline values: Poor 10%, Borderline 36% and Acceptable 54%.

The census survey included questions on consumption and frequency of the different food groups. Almost half of households (10% + 36% = 46%) don't have an acceptable food consumption score (FCS) (see Graph 3). The calculations and categories were made according to the World Food Program's FCS calculation methodology¹. This baseline used the adjusted thresholds since data show that sugar is consumed almost on a daily basis. Graph 4 presents the average frequency (in number of days per week) of food groups consumption. There is no notable difference in FCS between households with a female or male head.

Graph 4 Percentage of households by FCS level



Graph 3 Average frequency of food groups consumption



¹ <https://resources.vam.wfp.org/data-analysis/quantitative/food-security/fcs-food-consumption-score>

4.3. Indicator 5: Percent of (beneficiary) households reporting adequate access to household non-food items. BHA: M6. Baseline value: 26%.

Of 3,183 households surveyed, 825 (26%) reported having access to non-food items such as blankets, mats and kitchen sets. This low data is similar to indicator 2, related to households unable to meet their basic needs, again likely due to high poverty in the intervention area.

4.4. Indicator 6: Percent of (beneficiary) households who have reduced essential WASH related basic needs expenditures. BHA: M8. Baseline value: 71%.

Of 3,183 households surveyed, 2,272 (71%) reported having to reduce spending on WASH items such as soap and disinfectants during the emergency.

4.5. Indicator 11: Amount and percent of the activity budget spent on goods and services produced/procured in country. BHA: S13. Baseline value: USD 0.

This indicator will capture the amount and percent of total approved shelter and settlements sector activity budget in US Dollars (USD) produced/procured by the project in the affected host country.

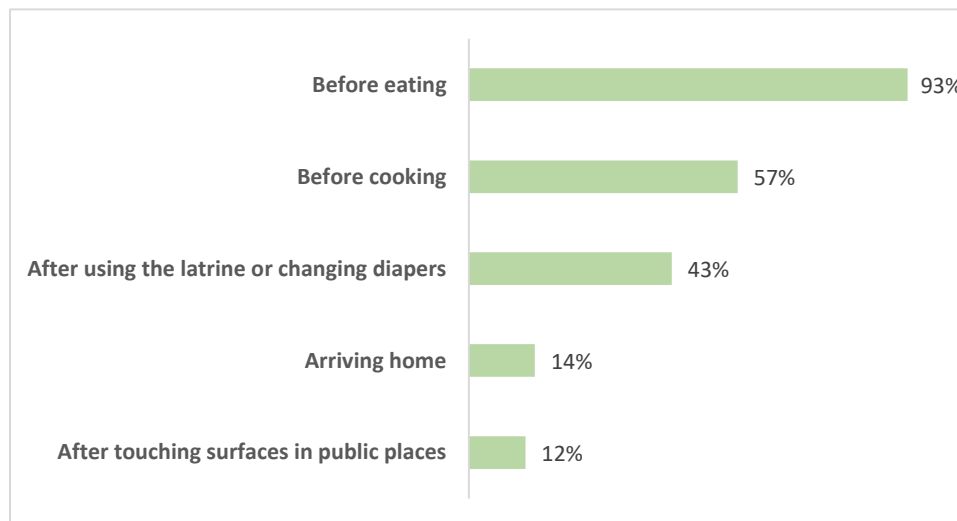
4.6. Indicator 24: Percent of households with soap and water at a handwashing station on premises. BHA: W8. Baseline value: 69%.

Handwashing stations with adequate access to soap and water were observed in 2,206 (69%) of 3,177 households (during the census, there was no access to observe six houses. That is why the total is not 3,183 as in the rest of indicators).

4.7. Indicator 25: Percent of people targeted by the hygiene promotion activity who know at least three (3) of the five (5) critical times to wash hands. BHA: W10. Baseline value: 48%.

Although it was observed that 3,177 (69%) households have adequate access to water and soap at handwashing stations, only 1,533 (48%) of 3,183 of the participants interviewed know at least three critical times for handwashing. This is the only indicator in which there is a marked difference between genders (female: 53%, male: 37%). Graph 5 shows the percent of participants who report washing their hands in each critical time.

Graph 5 Percent of participants who report washing their hands in each critical time



4.8. Indicator 26: Percent of households targeted by the hygiene promotion activity who store their drinking water safely in clean containers. BHA: S11. Baseline value: 85%.

It was observed that 2,717 (85%) of 3,183 households store water in clean containers. Indicator 26 aims to measure the project's efforts in lowering the probability of gastrointestinal diseases caused by the use and consumption of unsafe water.

4.9. Indicator 29: Percent of households targeted by WASH activity that are collecting all water for drinking, cooking, and hygiene from improved water sources. BHA: W33. Baseline value: 79%.

It was observed that 2,523 (79%) of 3,183 households have access to improved water sources such as private or public water distribution networks, private or public wells. Coupled with the fact that households are storing water in clean containers, this indicates an adequate culture of water hygiene among participating households—despite the emergency. However, almost 1 in 5 households must collect water from natural springs, rainwater, or ask their neighbors for it. Additionally, the housing assessment indicates that there are 43 (7%) out of 650 houses in which the water or sewage pipes broke.

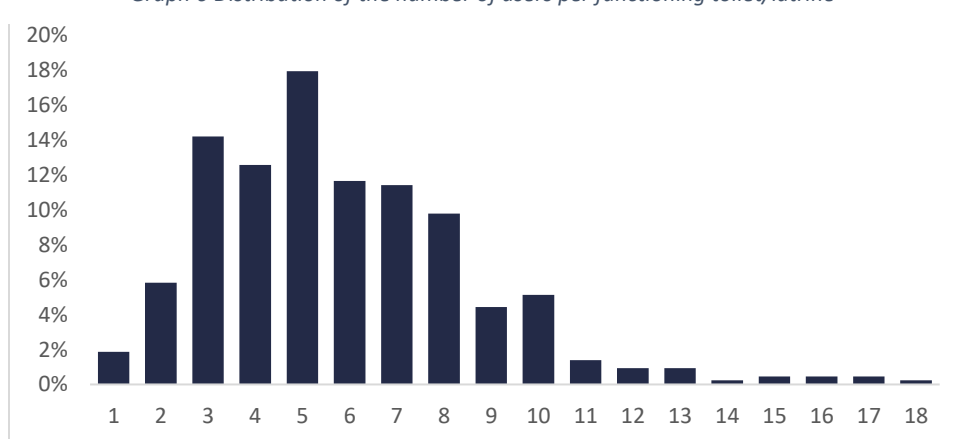
4.10. Indicator 30: Percent of water points developed, repaired, or rehabilitated that are clean and protected from contamination. BHA: W40. Baseline value: 0.

The project will visit the points built, repaired or rehabilitated three months later to determine their status by direct observation.

4.11. Indicator 38: Average number of users per functioning toilet. BHA: W38. Baseline value: 5.9.

According to the damage assessment in 650 households, the average number of users per functioning latrine is 5.9. (range is one to 18) (see Graph 6). Of the 650 directly observed households, 429 (66%) have at least one functioning latrine. Of the 3,183 participants surveyed, 73% indicated having at least one functioning latrine.

Graph 6 Distribution of the number of users per functioning toilet/latrine



4.12. Qualitative information

Eta and Iota affected several communities in the municipalities of Chiantla, Cuilco, Nentón, San Pedro Soloma and San Juan Ixcoy in Huehuetenango. The rains caused landslides, floods, and overflowing rivers that affected the infrastructure in communities. In these five municipalities, destroyed bridges, blocked roads and highways, partial or total destruction of homes, businesses, and public infrastructure were reported. In some communities the running water service was discontinued because some pipes

broke. In communities of San Pedro Soloma, human losses were also reported due to landslides (5 women and 2 men).

Due to landslides and mudslides, several communities were isolated. This situation affected families because basic products became scarce as local businesses were unable to stock such items. This caused some products to increase in price, affecting families' budgets. In addition, people found it difficult to get out of their communities to access basic services, to work, or to sell their products.

The storms also caused losses in both subsistence crops and commercial crops, such as coffee in the case of Cuilco. This impacted family incomes because it meant 1) having to buy agricultural products for family consumption or 2) losing income from the sale of these products or the sources of work that these crops generated in the communities. A female community leader in Chiantla stated, "We don't have corn, beans, sugar or many things of use in the kitchen. Everyone left their homes; they could not take out their blankets or what was in there. A few barely got something out. They are living somewhere else, they have not been able to return to their homes, they are asking for free lodging, right here in the community, but in other people's houses".

Once the emergency occurred, the Municipal Coordinators for Disaster Reduction (COMRED) were activated. These groups are formed by representatives of governmental institutions such as the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES), the Ministry of Livestock and Food (MAGA), the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS), the Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security (SESAN), the Secretariat for Social Work of the President's Wife (SOSEP), the National Army, the National Civil Police, and the Volunteer Firefighters, among others. Also, other non-governmental humanitarian aid organizations, local businesses, and private families quickly sent donations.

The first actions of some municipal mayors were organizing shelters and sending machinery to clear the access roads to the communities to bring the donation that was being received (food, medicine, clothes, and blankets). Shelters were set up in all municipalities to harbor the most affected families, mainly those who lost their homes. However, many families preferred to ask for hosting with relatives or friends. The Army and the Municipal Police provided support for the safety of the sheltered people. One almost instantaneous response was the support of Guatemalan migrants in other countries (mainly the United States), who sent money directly to their relatives or through community and religious leaders.

However, the aid received was not enough to cover all the families affected. This created discontent and perception of injustice regarding the distribution. The qualitative data collected in this baseline does not indicate that the most vulnerable groups have been prioritized (i.e. pregnant or lactating women, single mothers, senior adults, infants, people with disabilities, etc.). Some informants perceived greater support from institutions in municipal shelters, while community shelters were installed in schools or community rooms with less institutional support, depending more on the community organization and local authorities managing the available resources. Regarding the pandemic, some mayors reported that there were no infections in their municipalities while the collective shelters were operating. On the other hand, some informants reported a lack of hygiene practices and items. A participant who took refuge in a public shelter mentioned "We suffered hunger and cold. They didn't give us anything, they took us to a school, and we were suffering. Later, other families helped us. Our children got sick; the adults were in shock".

After prioritizing emergency shelters, local authorities, supported by different public and private institutions, began to make lists of affected families and diagnoses of damage to homes and crops. Qualitative informants generally report adequate coordination at the municipal level for this topic.

Nevertheless, as of the time of this baseline evaluation, the necessities are still numerous, and not enough municipal or central government budgets for recovery were identified. Many families continue living in damaged houses that are not suitable for habitation or, without food and essential non-food items. One of the municipal authorities reported that they received information from the central government that help would arrive to build or rehabilitate only five of the 227 houses needed in their municipality. Additionally, there are roads in poor condition. Many of public and private infrastructure needs to be rehabilitated. In general, inputs are needed to provide decent living conditions, reactivate agriculture and economy.

5. Programmatic Implications

The overall picture visualized through the quantitative and qualitative information shows that the purposes of RETOMAR are aligned with the needs of the project's participants for food and non-food basic items, return to acceptable living conditions, training in WASH good practices, and access water coming from improved sources.

Given many baseline results that were much higher or lower than expected, it is recommended the life of project targets for indicators 2 (BHA: M2), 5 (M6), 24 (BHA: W8), 25 (W10), 26 (BHA: W11) and 29 (BHA: W33) be adjusted to provide more achievable goals. Suggested revised targets are provided in Annex 1: Indicator Tracking Table. Additionally, the higher presence and storage of clean water but low levels of knowledge about handwashing indicate that the project should prioritize on trainings about hygiene practices.

6. Conclusions

1. Most of the participating households (88%) have very low monthly incomes (below US\$130) and are unable to meet their basic needs. They have had to reduce their WASH expenditures during the Eta and Iota storms emergency (71%) and do not have access to enough non-food items (74%) such as blankets, mats, and kitchen sets. Most households (71%) report spending the majority of their income on food or health.
2. The dietary diversity of almost half of the households (46%) is not acceptable; 1 in 5 participants report low consumption of animal protein sources.
3. Generally, households have access to private or public improved water sources (79%), store water in clean containers (85%), and adequate handwashing stations (69%). However, more than half of the respondents (52%) do not know at least three critical handwashing times, which is even more marked in male participants. Only 43% of participants report washing their hands after using the latrine and the minority (14 and 12%) report doing that when they arrive home or touch objects in public spaces. These are signs of the major need for training in basic WASH practices. In the context of COVID-19 combined with the tropical storm emergencies of Eta and Iota, WASH actions are essential to minimize transmission in at-risk populations.
4. Of the 650 households observed, 427 (66%) have access to at least one functioning latrine, and the average number of users per latrine is 5.9. The storms caused slight damage to 36% of the homes, moderate damage to 39% and severe damage to 25%.
5. Participants affected by the tropical storms took refuge in municipal and community shelters or in the homes of family and friends. Many families returned to their homes even though they were damaged and unfit for habitation.

6. Municipal and local coordination with governmental and non-governmental actors on emergency response was agile and material assistance began to be received rapidly. Even so, donations of essential items appear to have been insufficient. The responses of public institutions do not seem to be effective for all of the victims. And there is insufficient evidence that the most vulnerable groups have been prioritized.
7. For recovery, the generalized needs are for housing and road rehabilitation and economic reactivation. But, the lack of a national recovery plan, as well as of resources in central and municipal budgets, are factors that limit the authorities' actions in the recovery stage.
8. The quantitative and qualitative information shows that the purposes of RETOMAR are aligned with the participants' needs for food and non-food essential items, return to acceptable living conditions, and strengthen the basic WASH practices.

7. Recommendations

7.1. Sector: Multipurpose cash assistance

- Establish specific strategies for participating households to take advantage of the cash that RETOMAR will transfer to them, encouraging joint decision-making between male and female participants. Since most of them have low literacy, it is likely that they lack knowledge on how to plan and manage a budget properly, balancing food and non-food items.
- Promote the prioritization of the most vulnerable family members' needs (malnourished children, pregnant or lactating women, people with disabilities and seniors).

7.2. Sector: Food assistance

- Raise participants' awareness of the importance of consuming more foods from the fruit, vegetable, and animal protein groups and encourage participants' to use their cash transfers to purchase and consume more animal protein groups (egg is often an accessible and culturally accepted source).

7.3 WASH

- Identify participants who do not have access to non-food WASH items so that they are the ones who receive this type of assistance.
- Design training strategies on WASH to emphasize key handwashing moments, especially for male participants.

7.3 Shelter and settlements

- Establish how PCI will leverage existing information and partnerships already established with other key players in emergency response and recovery. Especially as it relates to debris cleanup and community brigades.
- Reduce the likelihood of a family returning to uninhabitable housing by linking them with other families willing to temporarily host their neighbors and prioritize the repair of uninhabitable housing so that families can return to their homes safely.

8. Annexes

Annex 1: Indicator Tracking Table

See the attached Excel document “Annex 1: Indicator Tracking Table”

Annex 2: Indicator Estimates Table

No.	BHA	Indicator	Baseline Value	Lower limit of the confidence interval at 95%.	Upper limit of the confidence interval at 95%.
2	M2	Percent of (beneficiary) households who report being able to meet the basic needs of their households (all/most/some/none), according to their priorities	12% Numerator: 382 Denominator: 3183	10.5%	12.9%
4	FS1	Percent of (beneficiary) households by Food Consumption Score (FCS) phase (Poor, Borderline, and Acceptable)	Poor: 10% Borderline: 36% Acceptable: 54%	Poor: 8.9% Borderline: 34.2% Acceptable: 52.4%	Poor: 11.0% Borderline: 37.6% Acceptable: 55.9%
5	M6	Percent of (beneficiary) households reporting adequate access to household non-food items	26% Numerator: 825 Denominator: 3,183	24.4%	27.4%
6	M8	Percent of (beneficiary) households who have reduced essential WASH related basic needs expenditures	71% Numerator: 2272 Denominator: 3183	69.8%	73.0%
11	S13	Amount and percent of the activity budget spent on goods and services produced/procured in country	N/A	N/A	N/A
24	W8	Percent of households with soap and water at a handwashing station on premises	69% Numerator: 2206 Denominator: 3177	67.8%	71.0%
25	W10	Percent of people targeted by the hygiene promotion activity who know at least three (3) of the five (5) critical times to wash hands	48% Numerator: 1533 Denominator: 3183	46.4%	49.9%
26	S11	Percent of households targeted by the hygiene promotion activity who store their drinking water safely in clean containers	85% Numerator: 2717 Denominator: 3183	84.1%	86.6%
29	W33	Percent of households targeted by WASH activity that are collecting all water for drinking, cooking, and hygiene from improved water sources	79% Numerator: 2523 Denominator: 3183	77.9%	80.7%

No.	BHA	Indicator	Baseline Value	Lower limit of the confidence interval at 95%.	Upper limit of the confidence interval at 95%.
30	W40	Percent of water points developed, repaired, or rehabilitated that are clean and protected from contamination	N/A	N/A	N/A
38	W20	Average number of users per functioning toilet	5.9	5.6	6.1