

UNICEF Executive Board - 2022 First Regular Session
10 February 2022
Statement by the UN Resident Coordinator to Honduras, Alice Shackelford

Panel 1: “Urgency to prioritize child poverty reduction as a pillar of inclusive and sustainable recovery, given the impact of the “triple c”: climate, conflict and COVID-19.”

It’s a pleasure to be with all of you today. Honduras has one of the highest levels of poverty and inequality in Latin America (Gini coefficient of 0.52) and is and has been impacted regularly by multiple crisis (Covid, conflict, corruption, climate etc). Before COVID19, extreme poverty affected 57.2% of households in rural areas and 21% in urban¹. With multidimensional child poverty affecting 79.4% of all children and adolescents², the UN system prioritizes in its new UNSDCF and HRP that no child is left behind.

All of this has worsened. The compounded effects of the pandemic and tropical storms Eta/Iota that hit Honduras in 2020 exacerbated levels of poverty, gender inequality, violence, and low institutional capacity. Honduras fell into a humanitarian crisis³ affecting 2.8 million people, 45.41% children. Being one of the most affected by climate change, the impact on children is profound (50-60% of people affected by disasters).

And to make things worse, economic contraction caused by the pandemic is expected to increase the number of households with children living in extreme poverty by 4.7% and plunge around 900,000 more people into poverty⁴. It has increased malnutrition; decreased access to education after 2 years of school closures; limited access to health services; increased violence; and reduced income, deepening inequality.

Honduras still suffers high levels of violence against children, especially girls. Approximately 25% of adolescent girls have experienced abuse. Some 34.5% of girls enter early unions before their eighteenth birthday. Social and gender norms exacerbate the risk and consequences of harmful practices such as corporal punishment, early union and tolerance of violence.

It is imperative to ensure that the new Government led by a woman focuses on building resilience with child focus preventing further collapses. Let’s not lose this opportunity. Let’s not leave any child behind in Honduras.

¹ National Statistics Institute, “Multiple indicator household survey”, Tegucigalpa, 2019

² Unless otherwise specified, data from: UNICEF, “Situation of children and adolescents in Honduras”, Tegucigalpa, 2020; United Nations, “United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026”, 2021; National Statistics Institute, “National Demographic and Health Survey/Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019”

³ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “ Humanitarian Needs Overview for El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras”, 2021

⁴ Estimates based on United Nations Development Programme, “Social and economic impact of the COVID-19 and policy options in Honduras”, Policy Documents Series, C19-PDS-No.4