

# HONDURAS

## COUNTRY PROFILE

5.4

Honduras has one of the highest levels of social inequality in the region and most of the population lives in conditions of extreme poverty. In recent years, the decline in exports due to rising food and oil prices in the international market has aggravated the situation of the most vulnerable. A number of initiatives exist to reduce tax evasion and improve the administration of tax collection, along with other commitments to multilateral institutions.

### 5.4.1 SELECTED RTU



## RTU Distrito Central

This region is the most populous in the country and consists of the cities of Tegucigalpa and Comayagüela (Department of Francisco Morazán). The economy is composed of trade and services with a textile industry (*maquila*) and a large sector of small and medium-sized enterprises. The area

has various streams that divide Tegucigalpa from Comayagüela and divide the capital into the old city and a new commercial district. There is a diverse economic infrastructure, public institutions and human settlements located on the river banks, and the whole area is affected by recurrent floods.

## RTU Puerto Cortés

Puerto Cortés is the second largest city in the country and is divided in two very distinct areas: the peninsula, an area of wetlands at sea level, where most of the population lives today; and the port area, where the refinery and main industrial activities of the country are located. Hurricanes, floods and technological accidents are among the most frequent

hazards. The municipal government decided to use income from the port administration to undertake improvements in the sewage system, water supply and treatment, road pavement and the relocation of settlements. Additionally, a considerable investment in education was made, making Puerto Cortés the first municipality in the country with no illiteracy.

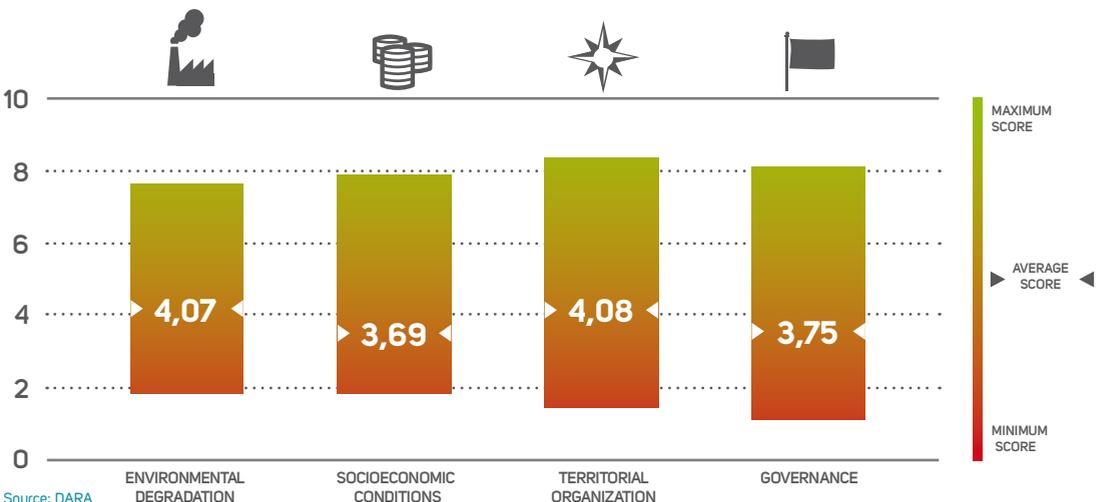
## RTU Valle de los Ángeles

This municipality is made up of small farms in steep terrain, located in the so-called *La Tigra* National Park (Department of Francisco Morazan), a protected nature reserve. With its attractive natural landscape,

this municipality has become an important tourist destination and this population growth has created greater exposure to risks from flooding, landslides, avalanches, wildfires and earthquakes.

## 5.4.2 RISK DRIVERS

CHART D: QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS IN HONDURAS BY RISK DRIVER



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### RISK DRIVER 1: Environmental Degradation

In the three RTUs, local government efforts to reduce environmental degradation are applauded. However, certain factors impede successful risk reduction, including the overexploitation of water resources,

deforestation and the overexploitation of land (RTU Distrito Central and RTU Puerto Cortés). The lack of available resources at the local and/or subnational level also presents a problem for risk management.

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### RISK DRIVER 2: Socioeconomic Conditions

The main socioeconomic factors impeding risk management in the three RTUs include poverty, limited access to drinking water, drainage services and education, unemployment and food insecurity. Furthermore, the social protection mechanisms

and the economic incentives used by the federal government are insufficient to deal with these problems. There are also few community initiatives to reduce disaster risk.

## THE DECENTRALISATION OF TECHNICAL, ECONOMIC AND PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES FAVOURS AN IMPROVEMENT IN CAPACITIES AND CONDITIONS FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

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### RISK DRIVER 3: Territorial Organisation

In all three RTUs, the occupation of unsafe or fragile land and poor quality housing are identified as factors that undermine risk management. DRR

is incorporated in local land use plans but it is not integrated sufficiently into public investment decisions or construction codes.

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### RISK DRIVER 4: Governance

The aspects of governance that most undermine risk reduction in the three RTUs are corruption, lack of coordination among different levels of government and high levels of bureaucracy. In the RTU Puerto Cortés, there are low levels of satisfaction with existing mechanisms and standards to control or reduce risk and in the RTU Distrito Central, the limited capacity of

institutions and centralisation in decision-making are considered to be particularly negative factors. In the RTU Valle de los Ángeles, the level of citizen participation in local development and DRR measures is considered insufficient.



Workers prepare materials for temporary shelters. Source: USAID/Kendra Helmer

### 5.4.3 SUMMARY

According to the questionnaire results in Honduras, there are aspects of all four risk drivers that impede risk reduction in the three RTUs, especially in the RTU Distrito Central. In this RTU, the precariousness of urban settlements, poor location of housing and lack of a sewage system increase the vulnerability of the population to flooding. The RTU Puerto Cortés stands out as a special case in Honduras because the local government has access to decentralised resources from management of the seaport. In Puerto Cortés there is a land-use plans and comprehensive land management programme, which forms part of the *Land Management Programme* of the European Union (URB-AL). The RTU Valle de los Ángeles is part of a tourist route called *La Tigra* trails, designed by the National Institute of Tourism to promote rural and adventure tourism in the area.

In the workshop held in Honduras, participants highlighted their main concerns and recommendations for risk management in the country:

- It is necessary to open up political spaces in order to identify the legal and institutional gaps in prevention and disaster response.
- Responsibilities for risk management should be decentralised.
- There is great concern about response and mitigation capacities.
- There is need for greater clarity in the definition of responsibilities of different actors.
- Effective DRR actions can only be achieved through multi-sectoral action.

One specific action related to decentralisation is recommended:

- Extend the decentralisation of technical, economic and professional resources to the whole of the country in order to improve the capacities and conditions to better manage different risks.