

# NEWS CLIP



**USAID GUATEMALA**  
DEL PUEBLO DE LOS ESTADOS  
UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA

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## 200,000 malnourished kids at risk in Guatemala

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Source: Reuters

By Emma Ross-Thomas

MADRID, Nov 16 (Reuters) - Some 200,000 malnourished children need urgent food aid in Guatemala after Hurricane Stan, the World Food Programme said on Wednesday, as it plans a new rapid relief network for the disaster prone region.

"Time is already against us," Pedro Medrano, Latin American Regional Director for the UN agency told Reuters in an interview. "I don't rule out that there could be loss of life, especially children ... We are talking about populations which have very little resistance."

He said that in the area of Guatemala most affected by Hurricane Stan, which killed up to 2,000 people in October, 70 to 80 percent of the population is chronically malnourished.

Storms have destroyed the maize harvest and hurt the coffee crop, removing sources of food and income. Medrano does not expect the population to be able to feed itself again for eight months.

The programme is trying to raise \$14 million for Guatemala, and has pledges for \$6 million, Medrano said.

### **RAPID-REACTION NETWORK**

After one of the worst hurricane seasons on record in the region, the World Food Programme plans to set up early next year a rapid response network for Latin America to allow food aid to reach victims more quickly.

"Every year we know that there are storms, hurricanes and floods. Every year ... between 4 and 10 million people are affected by storms (in Latin America and the Caribbean)," Medrano said.

The plan is to set up a network of food stores around the region, controlled from Panama, and to seal stand-by agreements with governments in the region to provide logistical support for disaster relief.

That will also allow it to buy grain before the crisis, when it tends to be cheaper, and store it in the region.

Medrano, who visited Spanish officials on Wednesday and was pledged \$1 million in aid for Guatemala, is also lobbying Spanish companies -- many of which have huge Latin American investments -- to provide aid for the region.

"We haven't had much luck, but we expect a lot from the Spanish private sector."