



# Flooding and Destruction in North Carolina

## Situation Report #3

October 9, 2024

**Project HOPE is responding in North Carolina to urgent needs in communities affected by Hurricane Helene's catastrophic flooding.**

### Situation Overview

The response to Hurricane Helene's flooding and destruction in western North Carolina is beginning to transition into a recovery phase. As people begin to rebuild and attempt to return to their homes, shelter occupancy fluctuates from day to day, with 19 shelters remaining active. At this time, at least 88,000 households are without power, many municipalities are without running water, and people are reckoning with the traumatic aftermath of the storm and its impact on their mental health.

For health facilities and shelters, access to running water remains the most significant concern, as damage to regional water systems may take months to repair. Project HOPE's team on the ground is meeting with health facilities and shelters to distribute essential items and conduct needs assessments. Shelter managers and health workers at charitable clinics and long-term care facilities are requesting large storage tanks for water management, so they can ensure a safe and clean supply of water for sanitation facilities, personal hygiene needs, and clean spaces for patients and residents.

### Key Updates

- Local health workers need surge staffing support so they can be relieved to address their own health and social needs.
- Lack of access to health care and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) supplies is increasing the risk of infectious and waterborne diseases.
- Project HOPE's team on the ground is distributing essential supplies to health facilities and shelters, including medicines, water, and hygiene supplies.
- Project HOPE continues to identify urgent health, water, sanitation, and mental health needs in the communities most impacted by this crisis.



Damage from Hurricane Helene in Asheville, North Carolina. Project HOPE's team on the ground is assessing damage, coordinating with local partners, and distributing essential supplies to clinics, shelters, and long-term care facilities. Photo by Project HOPE staff, 2024

## Project HOPE is Responding

Project HOPE is on the ground in western North Carolina coordinating the distribution of essential health and WASH supplies, including sanitizing wipes, over-the-counter medicines, soap, and other hygiene items, to seven health care facilities and shelters across Buncombe, Henderson, and Jackson counties. To date, our distributions have reached an estimated 2,500 community members. Access to water continues to be the most immediate issue, with some communities expecting to be without running water for months. **Project HOPE is improving water management at shelters and health facilities** by procuring and delivering 13 bulk containers, each of which are capable of holding 275 gallons of water.

**Project HOPE's team on the ground is hearing increased requests for surge staffing support** to relieve health workers at health facilities that have been continuously operating. Health workers report that they and their families have been staying at the clinics since the storm wreaked havoc and will soon need to transition to addressing their family's immediate needs. **Several facilities have also determined that they were not prepared for an event on this scale and would like support in preparing their staff and facilities for future disasters.**

The team has also encountered a huge demand for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services for frontline health workers and the most affected communities. As the shock of Helene's flooding begins to wane and people continue to process their experiences, we expect these needs to increase. **Project HOPE is mobilizing immediate mental health support services and developing a longer term strategy for addressing the lingering impacts on the community.**

As blocked roadways are cleared, Project HOPE's team will continue to travel to unreached communities north and east of Asheville to provide health facilities and community members with essential WASH and health supplies. Project HOPE continues to partner with the National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics (NAFCC), as well

***“There is no water here and they have told us we won't get water back for at least two months. We have 12 staff members living here at the center now to care for everyone. We can't shower, can't wash our clothes. We are doing the best we can with what we have, but the help is needed.”***

*— Robyne Clausen, Assistant Director of Clinical Services at an emergency medical shelter inside a long-term care center, where Project HOPE has delivered supplies*

as local charitable clinics, to ensure that health workers serving under-resourced communities have the tools they need to provide quality care and ensure equitable access to health care amidst a devastating disaster. **Project HOPE has a history of active partnership with the NAFCC, as well as local and state chapters of the organization.**

In the United States, Project HOPE recently responded to Hurricane Ida in 2021, Hurricane Ian in 2022, and Hurricane Idalia in 2023 by providing surge staffing to health facilities, delivering urgently needed supplies to affected communities, and equipping health facilities with medicines and supplies. **Project HOPE remains committed to responding to the impacts of Hurricane Helene, as well as Hurricane Milton, which is nearing Tampa, Fla. at the time of this report.**



*Project HOPE's Anna Jackson stands alongside Yolanda, a volunteer with Vecinos, a charitable clinic in Sylva, North Carolina that serves patients in under-resourced areas, including migrants working on nearby farms. Photo by Project HOPE staff, 2024*

*“As the climate crisis causes conditions that fuel more frequent and severe storms, communities facing the brunt of the impact must be supported in both their immediate recovery and their preparation for future disasters. Our response today must include building resilience for the future.”*

*— Arlan Fuller, Project HOPE  
Director of Emergency  
Preparedness and Response*