



Flooding and Destruction in North Carolina

Situation Report #4

October 31, 2024

Project HOPE's team in North Carolina continues to provide critical assistance to communities recovering from the catastrophic flooding caused by Hurricane Helene.

Situation Overview

The response to Hurricane Helene's flooding and destruction in western North Carolina has transitioned into a recovery phase. Earlier this month, water services resumed and many shelters have now closed as individuals return home to rebuild or seek out other temporary housing. Economic recovery in affected communities is expected to be slow, and, with aid services decreasing in availability, **Project HOPE expects the demand for basic health services at free and charitable clinics to grow.**

Health facilities are seeing a spike in demand for services as they transition from urgent needs back to more routine health care, and Project HOPE's free and charitable clinic partners are beginning to address a backlog of patient needs. However, access to care in rural, mountainous communities was limited before the storm and **restoring access to these communities through the use of mobile medical clinics remains a priority.**

Key Updates

- **Demand for health care services is rising** as the backlog of routine care needs must now be addressed.
- **Project HOPE has deployed a volunteer physician** and is planning to deploy additional medical volunteers to other free and charitable clinics to **ensure access to health care during the recovery phase.**
- Lack of access to health care and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) supplies **continues to increase the risk of infectious and waterborne diseases.**
- Project HOPE's team in North Carolina is **distributing essential supplies to health facilities**, including medicines, hygiene items, and sanitation supplies.



Yolanda Pinzon, outreach director at Vecinos, visits a home that suffered severe damage following Hurricane Helene. Vecinos is a charitable clinic Project HOPE has supported which provides free care to a patient population that is 100 percent uninsured or underinsured. Following Hurricane Helene, the clinic's staff went door-to-door to check on 700 patients who were living without power, water, and cell service. Eleven farmworkers live in this house and lost water and power for 15 days after the storm. They were forced to use a nearby creek as a water source, which caused skin irritation and health problems. Photo by James Buck for Project HOPE, 2024.

“The conditions on the ground have shifted from an urgent response to a long-term recovery. Our team has watched as health workers, first responders, and community members have shifted from the initial shock following the disaster to exhaustion and burnout.”

— Anna Jackson, Project HOPE Program Officer

Project HOPE is Responding

Project HOPE is on the ground in western North Carolina distributing essential health and WASH supplies, including hygiene kits, first aid kits, intermediate bulk container (IBC) tanks, mobility equipment, and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, to seven health facilities and shelters across Buncombe, Henderson, and Jackson counties. As water services have returned in the majority of the impacted areas faster than anticipated, our team has seen needs shift away from WASH towards OTC medicines and other health needs. To date, Project HOPE has reached an estimated 4,500 individuals with access to water, sanitation, hygiene, and medical supplies.

Project HOPE is partnering with local free and charitable clinics to help serve the backlog of patients in need of care. In North Carolina, Project HOPE has embedded a volunteer physician with Good Samaritan Clinic in Morganton, a free and charitable clinic. This physician is currently seeing patients four days a week to address needs that were postponed due to the emergency. Once a week, our volunteer physician travels with Centro Unido, a non-profit organization based in Marion that serves the region's Latino community, to support a mobile medical clinic reaching Spanish-speaking communities that have been unable to access local health services. **To date, Project HOPE's volunteers have conducted more than 91 clinic visits at no cost to patients.** Project HOPE will deploy a new doctor and nurse team next week to support the needs of communities served by Good Samaritan Clinic and Centro Unidos.

Through our partnerships with local health facilities, our emergency response team has seen a growing demand for resiliency programing that aims to strengthen existing infrastructure and ensure that health services and communities are better prepared for

the impacts of significant flooding and other future disasters.

Project HOPE continues to partner with the National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics (NAFCC), as well 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. **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's volunteer physician, Fay Holman, MD, and Wes Comfort, an emergency response team member, attend a free mobile medical clinic in Marion, N.C. Photo by Project HOPE staff, 2024.

“As with all disasters, the people who need emergency and long-term assistance most have the most difficult time accessing it. Existing barriers prior to the storm, such as lack of transportation or lack of financial means, have been exacerbated and compounded due to infrastructure failures and the loss of employment.”

— Anna Jackson, Project HOPE Program Officer

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