

Climate Emergency in El Salvador

El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated country in Central America. It ranks 15th on the Global Climate Risk Index – for countries most at risk of climatic impacts.

The country has been going through a deep environmental crisis, the worst for generations. It has been triggered, in part, by the adverse effects of climate change and perpetuated by the 2014–2016 El Niño phenomenon which led to severe drought, floods and irregular rains. This has pushed the communities SCIAF work with deeper into poverty.

The unique mangrove forests of El Salvador are not only a striking natural beauty, but they are an essential part of the eco system. They provide a defence to climate change and the impacts of extreme weather, are a vast habitat for diverse wildlife, and a major source of income for local communities.

Yet, due to rising sea levels, the mangrove trees are being destroyed at a dramatic rate. As a result, local people are struggling to survive. The dying forest has dramatically reduced the crab population, and locals are losing their only source of livelihood. They're struggling to make an income for themselves and their families.

Dr Ricardo Navarro is the Director of CESTA, a SCIAF partner in El Salvador. CESTA is the Salvadoran representative of Friends of the Earth International. They specialise in environmental issues, sustainable agriculture, and mitigating the effects of climate change. Their projects give priority to vulnerable groups such as disabled people, youth, small-scale farmers and rural communities. They are advocates for climate justice.



“For us to survive, we need to take the environmental situation much more seriously. We need environmental laws to be stricter. We have to understand that if we continue to destroy the planet, we are destroying ourselves. The laws should protect all of us, so we can continue on this planet.”

Dr Ricardo Navarro

CESTA, with support from SCIAF, are working with the local people to help them mitigate the effects of climate change.

Watch Dr Navarro's testimony 'Climate Change in El Salvador'

Transcript from Dr Ricardo Navarro's video:

In El Salvador, climate change is making life more difficult for people living in poverty.

The mangrove forest, which local people rely on for food, income and survival, is being destroyed.

"It used to be a larger area, but what happens is, the sea level has raised. There used to be mangroves. Now, all the waves from the ocean are coming, and they are removing all the nutrients, where the mangroves survive. So, it's the consequence of the wrong interaction we have with Mother Nature. The problem is that Mother Nature has some laws, some limitations, some ways of performing...and we, humanity, don't follow that. That's why we have this crisis."

Wildlife and plants are dying and local communities are at greater risk of flooding.

"When we allow some parts of the world to deteriorate, to suffer, in the end we all suffer."

SCIAF is working with partners like CESTA to combat climate change and help poor and vulnerable communities.

"We want people to know that climate change is having very serious impacts all over the world, this is just one of them."

Join us in the fight against climate change.

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund

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