



World Development Appeal 2016



El Salvador

Introduction

El Salvador is a small but densely populated country of roughly 6.2 million people, located on the Pacific coast of Central America. Five years ago, the UN Climate Change Office rated the country the most vulnerable in the world, with 80% of its territory reported as being at risk.

However, climate change is only one of the many sustainable development challenges currently faced by the people of El Salvador. Although the UN peace accords, which brought a formal close to the country's long-running civil war, came into effect in 1992, El Salvador is still deeply marked by its history of conflict. The long-term effects of the structural injustice and high levels of poverty which formed the background to the conflict are still being played out in its aftermath.

Land polluted by pesticides, a threatened coastline, youth gang violence, interrupted education, unemployment, culturally embedded gender inequality, and persistent violence against women are only some of the additional challenges faced by those who are trying to rebuild their land.

Project

Today, however, there is good news from El Salvador. The 2016 World Development Appeal invites us to visit Jiquilisco Bay, on the southern coast, where PROCARES, our highlighted partner, is working with the communities resettled here at the end of the conflict as they continue to address these challenges.

PROCARES stands for **Programme for Capacity-Building and Reconstruction in El Salvador**, and is one of our Christian Aid partners. Even before the war had ended, while thousands had taken refuge from the conflict in neighbouring countries, PROCARES stood in solidarity with the refugees, helping them to address issues of livelihood, education, and stability while they were still in exile. When the conflict finally came to an end, they were ready, and better-equipped, to reclaim hope, and so began the long walk home.

Some of the returned refugees were resettled in Jiquilisco Bay, with international (including EU) support. In the face of severe climate volatility, ongoing coastal erosion, and ruined

infrastructure, this new community began to reclaim the land, and along with it, their own future.

A Disaster Risk Reduction programme, coordinated early on by PROCARES, has provided some stability, with the establishment of weather monitoring stations and early warning systems. Mangrove preservation and reforestation campaigns, now a legal requirement, are ongoing, not least because mangrove forests provide a strong defence against the wave surges of tropical storms.

Perhaps the most important long-term challenge facing the people of Jiquilisco Bay, however, is that of establishing a local, sustainable, low-carbon economy, so that they can provide a livelihood for themselves, continue to build their community infrastructure, and offer secure employment to their children in the years to come.

The 2016 Appeal is helping the people of Jiquilisco Bay to do just that.

Reclaiming Hope

The **El Zompopero Cooperative Society** has recently become a vital part of this process. It has brought together four small shrimp farming cooperatives, and enabled them to work together.

“Our speciality was production,” says Carlos Parada. “We never really put a lot of focus on selling our shrimp well. We’ve always depended on intermediaries.”

Now, however, El Zompopero, with the support of PROCARES, is enabling the shrimp farmers to analyse the market more effectively, and to begin to coordinate their production and sales. This will make possible a higher quality, fully traceable product, and an increased income for the farmers themselves, whose “El Zompopero” shrimp will one day, they hope, be sold directly to the hotels and restaurants of San Salvador.

The government has already provided a distribution centre for El Zompopero, but it remains to be equipped, and that is where we come in. Funds allocated by the 2016 Appeal will be spent on electrical infrastructure (including an emergency generator), refrigeration and storage equipment, access road maintenance, a refrigerated truck, and ongoing training for cooperative members in accounting and business skills, and marketing.

During the civil war, Carlos Parada was wounded by a landmine, and he struggled to accept that what he had lost was little in comparison to what he might still do. “They say for each one of us, God has given us a mission,” Carlos can now say. “For me, my time is not up yet.”

The hard graft of good, sustainable development often comes down to this: learning resilience. Carlos and his colleagues still have work to do, and they are ready and eager to take the next step. It is our privilege in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to support them in the 2016 World Development Appeal.