

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS

EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS - COUNTRY FACTSHEET

Although middle-income countries, Honduras and El Salvador have hugely unequal societies – and Central America has the most inequality out of any region in the world. Christian Aid has a vision to see this change. We are beginning an innovative 4-year project to empower indigenous communities who bear the brunt of the region's stark inequalities. Focussing on sexual and reproductive health and striving for an end to violence, our partners will be helping women and girls to claim their rights and to secure justice in their communities.

Facts and stats – Honduras

- Population is 7.9 million.¹
- Honduras is the second poorest country in Central America.²
- 64.5% of population live below the poverty line.³
- Honduras ranks at 129 out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index, but although this indicates medium development, the situation for indigenous people is far worse.⁴
- Key exports are banana and coffee.

Facts and stats – El Salvador

- Population is 6.3 million.⁵
- 8,100 square miles in size, roughly the same size as Wales.
- 29.6% population below the poverty line.⁶
- Ranks as a middle-developed country but, as in Honduras, the situation for indigenous people is far worse.⁷
- Suffered a 12-year civil war in the 1980s which cost the lives of 75,000 people and left social and economic inequality that remains to this day.

In El Salvador, Beti Perez Mejia (11) plays with her sisters outside her home. In her old house, the family of twelve all slept in one room, and it was vulnerable to extreme weather – it nearly collapsed during the 2007 hurricane season. Thanks to Christian Aid's partner, a new house was built, ensuring that the family will be safe and dry during future storms.



Discrimination against women

In both Honduras and El Salvador, discrimination against women is rife. Machismo is endemic in both societies, a cultural concept which stresses a strong or exaggerated manliness, virility, and entitlement to dominate others. Violence and sexual conquest are considered proof of manhood. Women are often voiceless and powerless in this kind of society. Their role is traditionally confined to the home, where the man of the house tends to hold decision-making power.



Indigenous Communities

Indigenous people in both countries are extremely disadvantaged. Sexual and reproductive health is a particular problem in indigenous communities. In both El Salvador and Honduras, half as many rural births have skilled attendance compared with those in urban areas. There are a range of factors contributing to the unequal sexual and reproductive health of women from indigenous communities. The disproportionately high maternal mortality rates and low antenatal care indicates a worrying lack of access to health services caused, in part, by the fact that health provision is not adapted to community needs.

Family planning is culturally sensitive so is not widely practised, whilst contraception is not easy to acquire. Sexually transmitted infections are stigmatised, therefore testing rates are low, and, as education is not carried out in indigenous languages, there is low awareness of health rights. Communities urgently need to be empowered to call for their rights and to ensure that the governments in Honduras and El Salvador respond to their needs.

Natural Disasters and Climate Change

Because of high levels of poverty, vulnerability and a lack of infrastructure in the poorest areas, natural threats can turn into full-blown disasters. **The most marginalised communities in both countries are hit time and time again.** Natural disasters also hinder communities' progress, even wiping out existing development work and displacing people, leaving them vulnerable and insecure. The latest research also suggests that climate change will worsen the impact of weather-related disasters, exposing the poorest communities to greater threats.⁸

Violence

Central America is now the most violent region in Latin America and the Caribbean. High levels of inequality are linked to crime, violence and political instability, and the poorest communities are hit hardest. Young people are stigmatised due to the perception that they are involved in violent gangs, meaning that they are often denied their essential rights to education and employment.



In Honduras, Keivi Mena Hernandez (20) leads an activity with Christian Aid's partner the Honduran Episcopal Church, teaching her peers on the ways HIV can be transmitted. By educating students, our partner is working to equip tomorrow's leaders with the knowledge to challenge stigma and machismo attitudes.

What is Christian Aid doing in El Salvador and Honduras?

Christian Aid has been working with partners in El Salvador since 1983 and Honduras since 1997, striving to improve community health and to reduce inequality and violence. Also working in Nicaragua and Guatemala, our vision in Central America is of a fair and equal society, free from violence, achieved through democracy.

Our partners in these countries help the poorest communities to prepare for the worst when disaster strikes, empowering them to survive the devastating impact of tropical storms, hurricanes and floods.

We are working with the poorest communities to secure economic justice, prioritising women, youth and ethnic groups who have historically been excluded and discriminated against. We work to address the structural causes of vulnerability and exclusion, not just the symptoms. Our partners advocate for policy change at government level on issues like climate change and disaster risk reduction, tax justice and transparency, challenging the conditions that keep people poor.

Your church's support will do something amazing – you will bring these communities justice.

¹ <https://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=HONDURAS>

² <http://www.ciaworldfactbook.us/north-america/honduras.html>

³ <http://data.worldbank.org/country/honduras>

⁴ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>

⁵ [https://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=El Salvador](https://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=El%20Salvador)

⁶ <http://data.worldbank.org/country/el-salvador>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/Images/Taken-by-storm-climate-change-report-march-2014.pdf>



If there is any way we can help your group, please contact your local Christian Aid office, email cpartnership@christian-aid.org or visit christianaid.org.uk/partnerships

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Christian Aid and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

UK registered charity no. 1105851 Company no. 171525 Scot charity no. SC039150 NI charity no. XR94639 Company no. NI059154 ROI charity no. CHY 6998 Company no. 426928 The Christian Aid name and logo are trademarks of Christian Aid. The Christian Aid name and logo are trademarks of Christian Aid © Christian Aid 2015