

A YEAR IN EL SALVADOR

SUMMARY REPORT 2011

Plan is supporting better school management



About El Salvador

A 12-year civil war that ended less than a decade ago and a succession of natural disasters means El Salvador still struggles to make social and economic progress.

The level of violence is a large concern, every day one person under the age of 18 dies as a result of violence. Plan works with the poorest communities across three regions of El Salvador.

Problems affecting the children of El Salvador

- Low standard of education and healthcare
- Environmental hazards and social issues.
- Few opportunities for children to play a part in their community's progress.



Collecting water from the new community water system.

PLAN'S PRIORITIES IN EL SALVADOR

Promoting children's health

- Working to prevent childhood diseases and ensure children are well-nourished
- Educating communities on hygiene and giving them access to clean water
- Supporting health reform at national level

Education

- Improving the quality of early childhood care and education
- Supporting better school management
- Offering non-formal education settings like evening literacy classes and vocational training

Broadening opportunities for rural families to generate income

- Enabling families and young people access small-scale savings and loans schemes
- Helping small-scale entrepreneurs and farmers to develop their businesses
- Promoting vocational and business training

Promoting children's rights to participation and protection

- Advocating policies to protect children and prevent violence
- Offering training for people involved in community development
- Ensuring views of children and young people are heard

By being a child sponsor, you have directly supported projects like the ones below. Your ongoing support sustains our long-term development work which impacts the lives of children, their families and communities for generations to come.

Together we are making an invaluable difference to the lives of people in El Salvador.

To learn more about Plan's work in El Salvador visit:

www.plan.org.au/ourwork/southernamerica/elsalvador



Students learning at a secondary school.

CASE STUDY: BEING PREPARED FOR DISASTER

Jorge remembers exactly how he knew it was time to leave Cerco de Piedra, his village in southern El Salvador, after Tropical Storm Ida struck in November 2009.

"The first thing we did was monitor the rivers," he says of his children's group. "Once we saw the danger of a flood we started telling people to evacuate."

Within five hours Ida had unleashed more than 35 centimetres (14 inches) of rain, a quarter of the rainfall the country expects in a year. The storm's intensity caused extensive landslides and flooding, killing 199 people and forcing 15,000 more to leave their homes and seek refuge in temporary shelters.

It may not be apparent given the scale of the disaster, but Cerco de Piedra is one of the lucky communities. They had endured a storm the year before and had been working with Plan on a strategy to lessen the impact of future emergencies.

Reducing impact

Over the past year, Plan has carried out disaster risk reduction training with many different communities, including Cerco de Piedra. Our aim has been to ensure children and their families can identify the disaster risks in their communities, alert the neighbourhood when an emergency is likely, know what to do when it happens and are prepared for the aftermath.

As part of the training, children and their communities draw up plans of their locality, marking out vulnerable areas like rivers. They can then use this information to take preventative measures – by building up riverbanks, for example – or being especially vigilant at certain times of the year.

They also consider what their community will need after an emergency. In two municipalities, for example, Plan and local people refurbished two warehouses and stocked them with provisions so that they could be used as shelters in the event of a disaster.

Communities devise and learn early warning and evacuation systems and simulate disaster situations at home and in school so they are ready when a real emergency occurs.

Part of recovery

Such was the resilience of communities like Cerco de Piedra that they were able to assist Plan with our emergency response to Tropical Storm Ida, supporting families who had lost homes and possessions in other villages. For example, the villagers of San Antonio de Comasagua prepared 850 meals for children and their families in some of the areas worst affected by the storm.

Plan distributed supplies like blankets, food, soap and water to more than 1,300 families living in shelters or in their communities. We also made sure that measures were put in place to keep children living in the shelters safe from harm.

Elsewhere, women like Juliana, from Cerco de Piedra pitched in to rescue possessions. "We have been helping people whose belongings have been covered by water and mud," she said at the time. "We help them retrieve the few things they have left, clean them up and remove the mud."

More than a year has passed since Tropical Storm Ida, and children and their families are gradually putting the disaster behind them. Working with Plan, they are rebuilding their homes, schools and communities.

Some names have been changed for child protection and privacy reasons

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2010

- Plan protected children's health by helping to build more than 1,000 latrines
- Launched the Learn Without Fear campaign to protect children from violence in schools
- Helped to establish more than 100 youth organisations and offered them training in promoting their rights and managing projects



Group of women entrepreneurs make decorative flowers for sale.