



## Contribution of FIAN Honduras to inform the UN Secretary General's report on the adverse impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food

### Concrete examples of the impact of climate change on the full realization of the right to food in Honduras

Climate change has caused significant changes in current weather patterns at all geographic levels, globally, regionally, nationally and locally, causing numerous impacts on ecosystems, populations and their livelihoods, especially in the poorest countries.

In Honduras, changes in the climate are also evident with respect to historical behaviour. In recent years, a large number of adverse weather events have occurred, with greater frequency and intensity, especially with prolonged periods without precipitation and intense rains in short intervals of time. (MiAmbiente+, 2015).

According to various international organizations, Honduras is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. Being a narrow portion of land located between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, it is exposed to the influence of phenomena such as cold fronts, the intertropical convergence zone and easterly waves, the latter marking the season of tropical depressions, tropical storms and hurricanes (UNISDR, COPECO, & CEPREDENAC, 2013).

According to the projections and scenarios of the Third National Communication, it is expected that Honduras will experience significant variations in the seasonal distribution of rainfall in the short and medium term, an exacerbation of the heat wave in the June, July, August quarter and an increase in temperature of up to +1.5°C. These changes will generally generate an increase in the evapotranspiration rate, thermal and hydric stress on flora and fauna (including species of food and industrial importance), changes in rainfall dates and therefore in planting calendars, among others.

The year 2020 marked a substantial change in food security for the country in the face of the crisis caused by the COVID 19 pandemic and the socio-economic impacts of two tropical storms, Eta and Iota, towards the end of the year. According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) assessment report<sup>1</sup>, these climatic events affected 90% of the agricultural sector and 10% of the livestock sector. The World Food Program (WFP) published in its report that before the pandemic and the tropical storms, food insecurity affected 1.8 million people and that after these events, the number of people affected doubled to 3.3 million, a figure that could reach 4 million by the end of 2021.<sup>2</sup>

In the artisanal fishing sector in the municipality of Marcovia, in the Gulf of Fonseca, where FIAN Honduras accompanies fishing communities, FIAN Honduras has documented the impacts on three coastal communities due to the problem of marine intrusion and environmental degradation as an aggravating factor that increases the vulnerability of communities to hunger and malnutrition.

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<sup>1</sup> Assessment of the effects and impacts of Tropical Storm Eta and Hurricane Iota in Honduras, May 2021

<sup>2</sup> September 2021



Similarly, in the context of the Honduran Alliance for Climate Change (AHCC),<sup>3</sup> communities of Las Barras de Cuyamel and Motagua in the municipality of Omoa have been accompanied that suffer the same problems as a result of the loss of coastline.

For the communities of Cedeño, Punta Ratón and Guapinol in the municipality of Marcovia on the south coast, according to a study developed by FIAN Honduras, a variation of the coastline has been established taking 2012 as baseline. The results indicate that in a place referred to as Cedeño Centro approximately 65 meters have been lost up to a loss of 108 meters in a place known as Restaurante Sol, Playa y Arena. At the site of Las Puntillas, in the community of Punta Raton, the loss ranges from 66 to 85 meters. The residents indicate that the damage began 15 years ago. In one of the recurrent climatic events in the area, in 2015, the sea occupied the place where 200 houses were located. Currently, 59 houses remain in a resettlement, the rest of the displaced families subsist in improvised shacks. In the aforementioned areas, homes and businesses have been totally or partially lost.

The influence of climate change in the study area has been established from regional models, being mainly the increase of the ocean level in the next 50 years, which will reflect the increase of tidal waves in the areas closest to the coast and in the areas located in active channels of the estuaries. This intrusion trend could be between 50 and 100 meters per year.

259 people from the communities of Las Barras de Cuyamel and Las Barras del Motagua<sup>4</sup>, in the municipality of Omoa, north coast, were declared in a situation of public calamity and uninhabitable sites<sup>5</sup> due to the loss of territory, physical and economic community infrastructure as a result of marine intrusion<sup>6</sup>. In addition, seismic movements occur causing modifications in the territory and accelerating the process of coastal loss. As of 2019, 84 families remained in the communities, while others chose to move to other parts of the municipality, the country and even other countries. Finally, the families were relocated to a settlement called Union Barras in 2022.

Comparative data indicate that in 2011, the area of forest cover was 40.55%, and the sea in front of the coast had a land gain of approximately 1328.23 hectares; by the year 2021, forest cover decreased to 26.47% and the sea in front of the coast increased by approximately 127.6 hectares. Changes in the coastline range from approximately 5 to 186 meters in the last 10 years, in 10 points analyzed. On average, approximately 73.60 meters<sup>7</sup> of coastline has been lost in 10 years in the communities of Cuyamel and Motagua.

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<sup>3</sup> Platform of civil society organizations articulated to work jointly on the problems generated by the impact of climate change.

<sup>4</sup> Information updated as of March 18, 2019 by the organizations Medicus Mundi, Honduran Red Cross and CUSO.

<sup>5</sup> Municipal Corporation, 2014

<sup>6</sup> According to COPECO, since 1986, local residents have reported loss of land due to marine intrusion.

<sup>7</sup> Data per year in that time period, according to a study by the Honduran Climate Change Alliance, March 2022.



In the Gulf of Fonseca, artisanal fishing is one of the most important economic activities for the communities of the region, to which they have been dedicated for years. For them it is not only an economic practice, but an activity rooted in their culture and tradition.

Marine intrusion in coastal communities causes the loss of productive land and housing, a decrease in the income of fishing families due to serious changes in the volume and variety of fish and the modification of ecosystems that represent an indispensable means of livelihood for the population. These impacts imply forced displacement, food and nutritional insecurity, exacerbation of poverty, exclusion and inequality.<sup>8</sup>

The loss of the coastline and the consequent destruction in the communities also causes a decrease in the influx of tourists and implies a reduction in family income, mainly for women, since they offer food services and other economic initiatives that are linked to the tourism sector.

It is important to mention that the impacts of climate change vary between men and women due to their different roles and responsibilities, and the inequalities experienced by women in relation to access to land, credit, and information and technology. As well as the differentiated use and management of natural resources and their differentiated participation in decision-making processes. The impacts of climate change and gender inequality reinforce each other. On the one hand, the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation tend to exacerbate existing gender inequalities. On the other hand, gender inequalities mean that the negative impacts of these phenomena are greater on women and children, placing them in a position of vulnerability where their livelihoods, assets and health are affected.

Since women in Honduras are generally considered responsible for ensuring the survival of the family, this places a particular burden on women affected by climate change. At the same time, women, lacking adequate resources, tend to settle in high risk areas. Peasant and indigenous women engaged in agricultural activities are located in drought-prone areas and constantly lose their crops. In rainy scenarios, storms are short-lived but intense, quickly causing flooding and the loss of agricultural production. Similarly, women located on the coast are exposed to high risk housing due to the lack of alternatives.

### Public policies, legislation and planning that guarantee the DHANA in a context of climate change.

Recurrent climatic events have demonstrated the conditions of vulnerability in which the Honduran population lives. They reflect the results of a public policy that has neglected investment in social security systems and a national risk management system that responds reactively when natural disasters occur.

The Food and Nutritional Security Law, decree 25-2011, needs substantial reforms because it is practically focused on the description of the institutional structure and does not strategically cover fundamental issues contained in international instruments that seek the development of actions in

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<sup>8</sup>FIAN Honduras, 2022. "SOCIOECONOMIC DIAGNOSIS OF THE FAMILIES THAT DEPEND ON ARTISANAL FISHING IN COMMUNITIES IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MARCOVIA".



favour of the right to food. This law does not even have a regulation and activities are promoted through the National Policy and the food security strategy.

In general terms, these policy instruments need to recognize in a cross-cutting manner the need to confront the impacts of climate change on food systems, especially local food systems made up of men and women who produce food in an artisanal manner, for subsistence or for exchange in their localities. There is also a marked bias towards agricultural production, which is focused on agribusiness, ignoring other productive activities on which the population depends, such as beekeeping, small-scale livestock farming, aquaculture, artisanal fishing, among others.

The government's response to climate change focuses on support and assistance to large companies and production chains. Small family units, small-scale producers' cooperatives and women with economic initiatives in the informal sector are often excluded from these efforts. Depending on their social, economic and environmental conditions, these populations are highly vulnerable and unable to recover from losses and damages on their own.

The lack of coordination among government agencies is evident, as there is no coordination of actions on food and vulnerability to climate events among government ministries.

The Ministry of the Environment has made progress in the approach of looking at food issues and climate change through the National Climate Change Strategy and the National Adaptation Plan. It is essential however that the food sovereignty axis of the National Adaptation Plan be strengthened by the other State agencies related to food, prioritizing measures such as the promotion and establishment of ecological agriculture, which favour not only adaptation actions but also mitigation actions.

Gaps in the national planning include those relating to the definition and scope of climate change and risk management actions to be carried out, both nationally and locally. The instruments for the collection and design of Municipal Development Plans (PDM) are also still lagging behind, these aspects are so essential for a highly vulnerable country like Honduras.

Likewise, these planning instruments do not have indicators that can be used to know or assess the characteristics and intensity of events and determine future actions.

However, we can describe as positive that the National Adaptation Plan is in line with principles and objectives based on human rights and climate justice. Also, that a national decarbonization policy is being built this year that has elements that promote fundamental rights.

### Practices and challenges in the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right to food and nutrition

The following aspects are critical for ensuring the right to food and nutrition in the implementation of the agri-food and food sovereignty pillars of the National Adaptation Plan:

- Establish a legal framework for the protection of the use and management of seeds and plants that belong to the territories and constitute the cultural food base of the communities, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. It implies, among other measures, that the National Congress apply the resolution of the Constitutional Chamber of the



Supreme Court that declared unconstitutional the Law for the Protection of Plant Varieties Decree No. 21-2012.

- Prioritize in investment plans projects with artisanal producers, small cooperatives and productive initiatives of women that are managed ecologically. Provide financing that is adapted to the conditions of these groups, and provide them with technical assistance.
- Compliance with the mandate of the Honduran Constitution in the implementation of programs and projects, which requires that "agricultural production should be oriented preferably to meet the food needs of the Honduran population, within a policy of adequate supply, fair prices for producers and consumers"<sup>9</sup>. Rather than, as it has been done so far, channelling efforts towards the promotion of agricultural exports, providing them with the best natural resources and funds for the recovery of their investments when affected by natural phenomena, among other aspects.
- To provide small-scale male and female producers, be they farmers, fisherfolk, aquaculturists, beekeepers, among others, with the means and social, economic and environmental conditions for greater resilience.
- Establish strategic protection measures for families and communities displaced permanently or temporarily by climatic conditions, to ensure sufficient livelihoods to guarantee the right to food, among other fundamental rights that allow an adequate life.
- Involve affected communities, particularly rural, indigenous and artisanal fisherwomen, in the design of policies, strategies and planning to develop actions with an ethnic and gender focus in response to climate change and environmental destruction.

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<sup>9</sup> Article 347 of the Constitution of the Republic