

Dear friends;

As we approach the end of 2018, we renew our profound thanks to you for your support and solidarity with the people of El Salvador – especially the poor and marginalized.

2018 has been a year of many challenges but also of important triumphs. In previous months, we have shared with you the difficulties of rural communities, especially of women, suffering from drought, flooding and debilitating crop loss from climate change in the Bajo Lempa region in eastern El Salvador.

Climate change is a searing reality in countries like El Salvador that exacerbates poverty and exclusion and threatens the traditional livelihoods of people who live in rural areas, as evidenced by the personal testimony of Reina Leiva, one of our counterparts from the coastal community in Jiquilisco, who described the heartbreak from the loss to her and her family of her entire crop of corn due to prolonged drought earlier this year. “*The rains no longer arrive as before, and the corn dries soon*”, she told us. Months later, the same communities lost additional crops (and, in some cases, homes and livestock) to flooding.



Reina Isabel Leiva from Jiquilisco



Delivering our first emergency aid

Together with CRIPDES, a social national grassroots organization and one of our longstanding partners in El Salvador, we were able to support some of the communities most affected by climate change or poor water management through direct aid, leadership training and public policy advocacy at the municipal and national levels. Our direct aid – *made possible by your support* -- benefited 210 women involved in micro-scale cattle-raising who received “*emergency baskets*” with basic grains for human and animal consumption.

These same women received leadership training in support of empowerment efforts to help strengthen the involvement of women in community based social movements. Finally, our support for public policy advocacy strengthened the struggle to attain a General Water Law and constitutional reform recognizing water as a basic human right, two elements essential for building good governance in the water sector.



Defending water during September 27th protest
From left to right: Bishop David Alvarado from the Episcopal Church, Monsignor Jose Luis Alas, SHARE El Salvador Director Isabel Hernandez and Baptist Church Pastor Emanuel Tomas Castro.

On September 27, the SHARE team in El Salvador participated, along with the Catholic Church, the historical Protestant churches, the Jesuit Central American University (UCA), parishes, community organizations, environmentalists and broad based social movements in a march to the Legislative Assembly to demand the approval of a General Water Law and a constitutional reform that recognizes water as a basic human right.



Campesino women from Bajo Lempa during protest for water rights

Nearly 15,000 people participated in this march during which more than 200,000 signatures were delivered to the Legislative Commission on Environment and Climate Change demanding the approval of a General Water Law.

SHARE's campaign: Water is Life: Defending the Right to Water and Sanitation in El Salvador

According to many experts, El Salvador has the most devastated natural environment in the western hemisphere, after Haiti, with 93% of its surface waters polluted by toxic chemicals, heavy metals and waste matter. And the Latin American Water Tribunal reported recently that El Salvador is on the verge of a severe water crisis, in terms of quantity, quality and availability. With a population density of almost 300 inhabitants per

square kilometer (the highest in the western hemisphere), the environmental situation of El Salvador is likely to worsen in the years to come if efforts to attain legislation for more effective integral management of water resources is not forthcoming.

Our campaign, “*Water is Life: Defending the Right to Water and Sanitation in El Salvador*”, is an effort to educate, build awareness and empower community participation in the ongoing struggle in El Salvador to resolve a water crisis that threatens the future of the nation and its people.

The campaign includes three interrelated components:



1. Emergency aid to rural women facing the brunt of the drought;



2. The promotion of alternatives to traditional agricultural products and practices to help mitigate crop losses in the future, including planting home gardens, diversifying crops beyond corn and beans, experimenting with drought resistant seeds, recycling and storing rain water, constructing irrigation systems and developing local insurance plans.



Isabel Hernandez, SHARE El Salvador’s director during a press conference against the privatization of water

3. Ongoing support for the organizations and social movements fighting for socially and morally responsible public policies that recognize water as a fundamental human right – including the Salvadoran Catholic Church, the Jesuit University, nonprofit organizations and community organizations who comprise the social movements advocating for just water policies.

The problems that confront El Salvador are profound and complex and the challenges that remain for SHARE are daunting. Nevertheless, we are filled with hope, inspired by the spirit of St. Oscar Arnulfo Romero, the 6 Jesuit priests and their housekeepers of the UCA, 4 US churchwomen and so many other heroes and martyrs who offered their lives in search of a more compassionate and just society in this beleaguered country. We are anchored by the Salvadoran people who persist in their struggle and we are fortified in our efforts by your ongoing love and support of the SHARE Foundation and its mission to advance the Common Good.

You are our light in the darkness and you make our work possible. For that, we are forever grateful.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jose Artiga". The signature is written in a cursive, fluid style.

Jose Artiga
Executive Director

PS. We are convinced that addressing root causes of poverty and violence will reduce the exodus of people to the North. We thank you for your ongoing support and for your donation to our WATER IS LIFE Campaign.

We invite you to join our Election Observer Mission to the presidential elections this February 3rd and March 10th. Please visit our website for more information:
www.share-elsalvador.org