



OVERVIEW

El Salvador, a republic in north-eastern Central America about the size of the US state of Massachusetts, is bordered by Guatemala to the west, Honduras to the north and east, and the Pacific Ocean to the south. It is the smallest and most densely populated Central American Country. San Salvador is the capital and largest city. More than 25 volcanoes dot the country and there is frequent and sometimes very destructive earthquakes, (February, 2001) volcanic activity and susceptibility to hurricanes.

El Salvador, which means "the Saviour" got its name when it achieved independence from Spain in 1821 and from the Central American Federation in 1839. The people of El Salvador have had a rough history to say the least. By the 20th century, 95% of El Salvador's income came from coffee exports, but only 2% of the population controlled that wealth. Intermittent efforts by the poor majority to redress El Salvador's social and economic injustices were met with severe repression.

The most recent disturbance was a 12-year civil war, which cost the lives of some 75,000 people, and was brought to a close in 1992 when the government and leftist rebels signed a treaty that provided for military and political reforms. El Salvador now finds itself in the middle of the new era of globalization and international trade. Internationally owned factories now account for the majority of El Salvador's exports while the number one income are remesas (money sent back from family and friends working abroad).

ECONOMY

El Salvador is a struggling Central American economy which has been suffering from a weak tax collection system, factory closings, the aftermaths of Hurricane Mitch of 1998 and the devastating earthquakes of early 2001, and weak world coffee prices. The trade deficit has been offset by remittances (an estimated \$1.6 billion in 2000) from Salvadorans living abroad and by external aid. As of 1 January 2001, the US dollar was made legal tender alongside the colon.

ENVIRONMENT

With its tropical climate and rustic landscape El Salvador is a beautiful country. However, with the highest level of environmental damage in the Americas, El Salvador runs the risk of losing its beauty, especially since it's the only country in Latin America without environmental protection laws. Less than 6% of the country remains forested since the land is intensively cultivated. Quality coffee predominates in the highlands, sugar in the lowlands and cotton on the coastal plains. Many of the country's river systems suffer from pollution, and some fear that at the current rate of destruction the country will run out of drinking water in less than 15 years.

republic of **EL SALVADOR**



INTERESTING FACTS

POPULATION

6,470,379 (2003 est)

AREA

8,124 sq
(21,040 sq km)

EXPORTS

Textiles, coffee, sugar, corn, rice, beans, oil seed,
cotton, sorghum; shrimp; beef, dairy products

RELIGION

Earlier statistics identify as much as 83% of the population as Roman Catholic. However, one recent source estimated as many as 40% protestant Christian (with the majority being Pentecostal and Baptist denominations).

LITERACY / EDUCATION

Literacy in rural El Salvador (%)

Men	72.6
Women	66.8

Average Schooling received (grade completed)

Total	5.5
Urban	6.9
Rural	3.5

Country	Literacy %		Average annual income	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
USA	99	99	\$42,540	\$26,389
El Salvador (rural)	72.9	66.8	\$3,917	\$1,288

ECONOMIC STATISTICS

42% are in poverty (not able to provide adequate shelter, healthcare, education or clothing). As high as 65% in some departments

19% are in extreme poverty (not able to provide basic food necessities). As high as 36% in some departments

Average annual income (rural)	\$1382
Average annual cost of basic food supply	\$1320

Year	Distribution of Income (%)	
	Lowest 20%	Highest 20%
1961	6	61
1969	4	51
1979	2	66
1992	3.2	54.5
2002	2.4	58.3

ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

Service	%
Electricity	63.4
Potable Water	47.6
Trash Disposal	5.2
Sanitation facilities	84.3

41% of rural homes use contaminated water
82% of "potable" water is also heavily contaminated

OTHER INTERESTING STATISTICS

In 2002 2,778,286 Salvadorans lived outside the country

% of homes receiving financial support from outside the country	22.2
% of income made up by support	46.2

Use of support from the exterior (%)

General Consumption	91
Housing	.6
General Investment	6.9
Savings	1
Other	.5

MAJOR SOCIAL CONCERNS

Gang activity, exported from the US, has taken a major hold in El Salvador. There are two rival gangs; Mara 18 (18th street gang from LA) and Mara Salvatrucha (MS). Gang activity accounts for a majority of the violence in the country. In January, 2005 there were 290 murders (more than Costa Rica had in all of 2004).

Resources: CIA World Factbook - El Salvador www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/es.html

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/central_america/el_salvador/index.htm

United Nations' Informe sobre Desarrollo Humano en El Salvador 2003

MISSION:

equipping churches to transform communities

ENLACE exists to enhance the effective collaboration between local churches and community organizations to develop integrated and sustainable solutions to poverty in El Salvador. ENLACE exists to foster dialog, partnership, collaboration and leadership within and between low-income communities and external organizations to achieve substantive transformational development.

To realize this mission ENLACE works to:

Provide training and technical assistance to local churches and community organizations to identify, design, manage and evaluate projects and programs in their communities.

Identify and develop partnerships with local and international organizations, foundations, businesses and individuals that share a common vision to assist the poor.

Conduct organizational capacity seminars and courses for clergy, laity and other community members.

Facilitate broadly based forums to exchange information, coordinate activities and create a concerted action among and between community members and other agents of development.

PROGRAMS

The Integral Mission of the Church: The backbone of ENLACE's mission is to support the local church's vision for its community. The Integral mission of the church believes that effective demonstration of Christ's love is an essential and integral part of the Church's mission in the world. "If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world."

Spiritual and material poverty is a product of fragmented relationships between God, humans and nature. The church is God's commissioned body to restore all His children to Himself and to each other. Self-sacrifice is an essential component in transforming a community, and it is only in Christ that we learn to truly love our neighbor as our own self and serve sacrificially those in need. Relationships based upon respect, care and love will create community. Community starts with the Lordship of Christ and is nourished in the church. ENLACE addresses this fragmentation between a church and its community by recognizing, developing and empowering the local church's vision for its community.

PROGRAMS: SUPPORTING THE CHURCH'S VISION

ENLACE's programs aim to strengthen and support the local church's vision for its community. The programs help to build a strong church body whose inward community spills out into the general community. The programs provide the church with the technical tools and organizational capacity to understand the sources of needs, to maximize and identify existing resources, and to develop new opportunities to alleviate poverty.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

communities receive assistance to resolve immediate and long-term health problems through curative and preventive strategies. water systems, latrines, self-sustaining health clinics, medical intervention teams, nutrition programs

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC PROGRAM

Agricultural Alternatives: small-scale farmers are equipped with the tools, resources, and partnerships necessary to compete in local and international markets. passion fruit, lorroco, plantains, grapes

Micro-enterprise development: entrepreneurs are given training, customized loans and on-going support to start or expand small businesses. bakeries, seamstress shops, pig farms, vegetable gardens, neighborhood stores

THE CHURCH AND ITS COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Rural church bodies are given the capacity both physically and theologically to be active agents of lasting change in their communities. Training sessions focusing on the Integral Mission of the Church empower rural churches in their quest to be effective servants in their community and helps shape and support their outreach efforts.

PREPARATION LISTS

TRIP OBJECTIVE

ENLACE's primary objective in hosting international short term groups is to support the local church's vision for their community. Our mission is to equip local, rural churches to become effective agents of a Christ-centered change in their community. All projects taken on by international teams are aligned with the church's stated mission and vision for ministering to their community.

THINGS TO BRING

- Valid Passport (There are currently no visas needed for US and Canadian citizens).
- Shots and Vaccinations (please check Center for Disease Control's current recommendations at www.cdc.gov/travel/camerica.htm)
- 2 towels, pillow & twin sheets (or sleeping bag) for nights in the community
- Sunscreen (*at least SPF 15*)
- Flashlight
- Shower shoes / flip flops
- Hat
- Umbrella and rain gear
- Sturdy shoes that you don't mind getting wet and muddy
- Pants for men, long pants or skirts for women recommended
- Mosquito repellent
- Soap and shampoo
- Hand sanitizer
- Ear plugs (roosters don't just crow at dawn)
- Personal medicines
- Gloves (for work teams)
- One change of clothes, plus toiletries, in your carry-on bag
- \$10 for a tourist visa upon entry at the airport
- \$27 exit tax upon departure (paid at airport)
- Small bills (Anything over a twenty can be very difficult to change here. NO traveler's checks. ATM's are abundant in the capital.)
- A few teams have chosen to bring mosquito netting and even small camping tents to keep out the critters.

THINGS YOU'LL ENCOUNTER

- Guns: police at the airport and along the road as well as security guards ALL over the capital tote BIG guns.

- Dirty food and water: the only way to be completely sure is to only eat things that are thoroughly cooked and fruit that has a skin, and only drink liquids that you know came out of a bottle or can (avoiding all things frozen as well).
- Heat and humidity: Two seasons. 1. hot and dry. 2. hot and humid.
- Economic extremes: the capital is home to shopping malls and Pizza Huts as well as a huge percentage earning less than a dollar a day. There is an enormous, visible difference between urban and rural life.
- No access to flushing toilets and hot showers while staying in the community
- Trash
- Crazy driving: Yes, just a bit crazier than a NYC taxis.

DONATIONS

- Toys and candy are especially fun to give out to kids, but there are obviously larger needs at stake. Most communities already have access to junk food and candy, but there is not always availability of things like toothbrushes, toothpaste and quality soap.
- Most major donations we usually give to the local church to distribute how they see fit. They certainly understand the local need better than we do. It is much more effective and sustainable for donations to be seen as gifts from the local church rather than an outside entity.
- Medicines- ENLACE's clinics are dependent upon and always in need of medicines. A sample medicine list can be sent upon request. *Note:* when bringing medicines you should be aware that you should have a letter of permission to bring them into the country and the medicine must NOT be expired or within six months of expiration.
- Sports equipment can always be used. We often pass the equipment on to Liceo Cristiano's sports program where it is put to effective use.
- Many groups become interested in sponsoring children in rural communities. ENLACE recommends visiting Latin American Childcare's website and becoming familiar with their excellent process of child sponsorship www.lacc4hope.org

IN-COUNTRY AND PROJECT EXPENSES

- All project expenses can be sent through the ENLACE USA (preferably at least six weeks in advance of team arrival). Please make checks payable to ENLACE USA and include a note designating the purpose of the funds. Please write two separate checks for in-country and project expenses. Send payments to:

ENLACE USA
5405 Alton Pkwy
Suite 5A Number 458
Irvine, CA 92604

IMPORTANT NOTICE: In-country trip expenses are not eligible for tax deduction or denominational missions credit.

WHAT ELSE TO BRING

- Devotional material: Group and personal reflection and prayer time before, during and after the trip is highly recommended. It is often a good idea to appoint someone as "team chaplain." This individual can be aware and responsible of all things spiritual during the trip including group prayer and devotional times.
- A "team nurse." Identify one team member to be in charge of a travel medical kit and aware of any special allergies or medical problems among team members.
- A journal. You'll be glad you did.
- A servant's spirit and a Learner's attitude. By attempting to learn and serve you will inevitably be used in the greatest manner possible.

- A sense of partnership: By taking part in an ENLACE trip you will be connecting and partnering with a rural church who has a desire to reach out to their community. Every “ENLACE project” is really a local church’s project that we are partnering with.
- A note from Jonathan Bonk on short term missions. “Like it or not given our current global super power status that necessarily accompanies US Christians abroad, unless we purposefully strip ourselves of the patterns that work for us- our usual clout, our ‘can do/let us do for you’ attitudes, and our subconscious assumptions of power and privilege—we are not likely to really model or communicate God’s love in an incarnational way. We need to allow ourselves to be interrupted by the agendas of others, especially the agendas of the poor, typically the most overlooked and ignored.”

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

When you arrive at the El Salvador International Airport you will follow signs (in English) to Immigration and Baggage claim. The process has been known to change frequently, but currently foreign visitors are directed to a separate immigration line where they will ask you the purpose of your trip (tourism) and the location and length of your stay. They have recently re-initiated the process of tourist visas. You will be asked to pay \$10 per person for a tourist visa that lasts for 90 days. You must keep the ticket stub until you leave the country. From there you will proceed to baggage claim. After passing through a traffic light directed random baggage search you will pass out of the air conditioning and into a sea of faces waiting earnestly for friends and family. Unless otherwise stated, an ENLACE staff member will be outside to meet you. If you have any problems with immigration or your baggage and you desire assistance, you can send a team member outside to find an ENLACE staff to help.