

# ENCA



Environmental Network *for* Central America

[www.enca.org.uk](http://www.enca.org.uk)

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## COVID-19

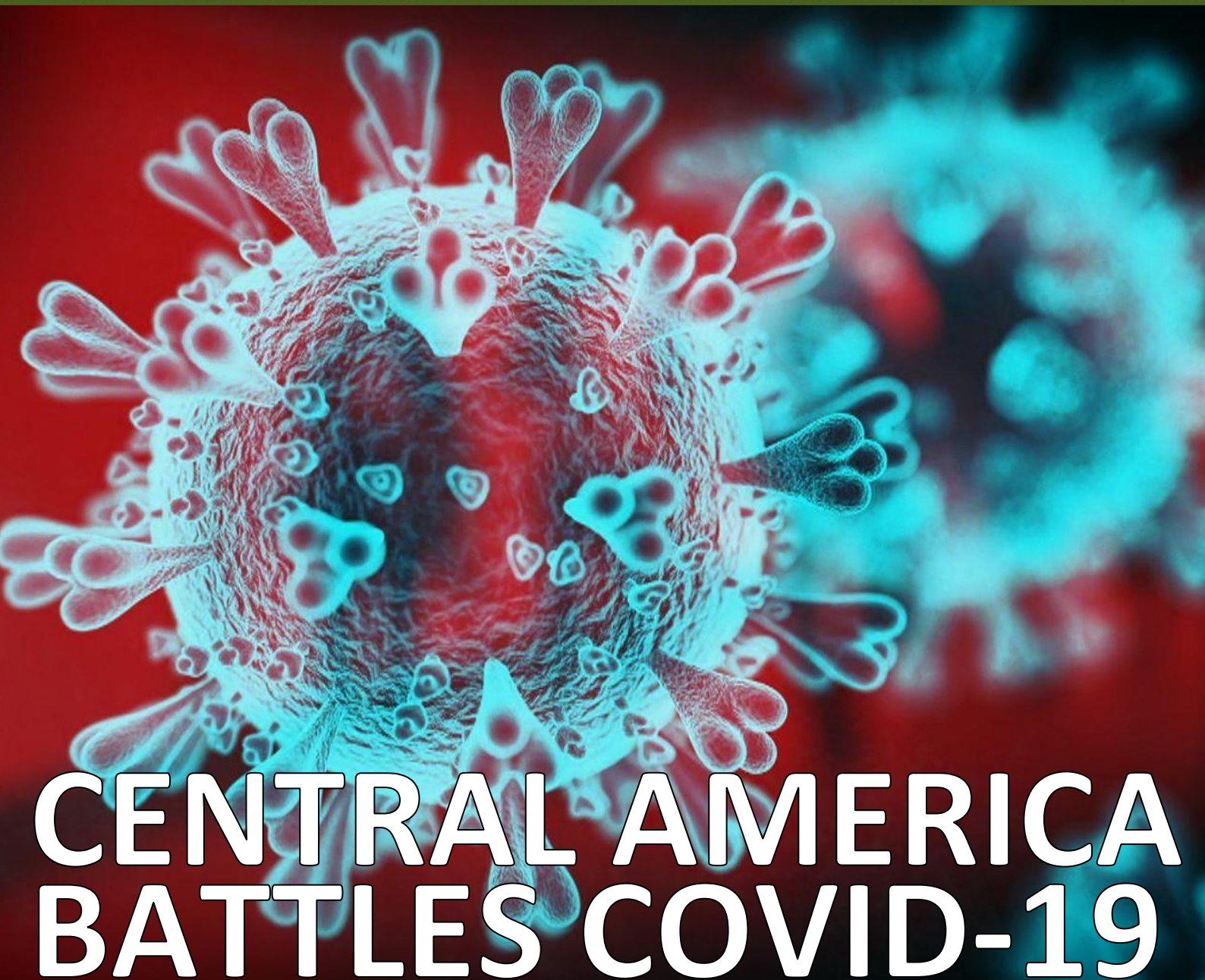
A round-up of the latest impacts of coronavirus

## Tropical storms

Amanda, Cristóbal and Godzilla sand storm rip through CA

## Jehry Rivera Murder

Latest developments in the fight for justice



# CENTRAL AMERICA BATTLES COVID-19



ENCA aims to work directly with people in communities who are seeking to arrest environmental degradation and who are often struggling against the repression and violence of armies and police forces acting under the command of wealthy individuals, transnational corporations and corrupt politicians. We campaign with them to place environmental rights within national constitutions and to ensure that the exploitation of natural resources benefits the many and not just the few and is carried out within sustainable and renewable bounds.

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## Pandemic to bring about a change of development model in Central America?

By Martin Mowforth

In a 2<sup>nd</sup> May article published in El Salvador's daily newspaper *La Prensa Gráfica*, Ernesto Mejía reported on a speech made by Seynabou Sakho, Director for Central America within the World Bank in which he asserted that the region would have to change its model of development when the crisis of the coronavirus pandemic has subsided.

As examples of the kind of changes that would be needed, Mr Sakho cited the need to close the technology gap between Central America and the developed world, the need to give access to education and health services at a distance, and to give higher priority to spending on health and social protections for the most vulnerable sectors. He also cited the need for business to develop an economy based on much lower carbon emissions.

"This crisis has the potential to affect access to education, nutrition and health for many people. We shall have to invest more in human capital and ensure that people are protected," stated Sakho. He also spoke of the need to postpone for at least six months the debt repayments to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund of the two most indebted countries, Honduras and Nicaragua.

Whilst recommendations to focus more on health, education and social protections are laudable as aims, his speech did not sound like the fundamental switch of direction that is required if development policy is to genuinely benefit the vast majority

of people in the region. Instead of bolstering big business and continuing with the export model of development, the World Bank and IMF should be refusing to invest in fossil fuel exploration and exploitation, and refusing to support an industrial model of agriculture which uses the best land in the region to grow crops destined for Europe and North America. They should stop their promotion of privatisation of public services and natural resources and should urge the governments of the region to legislate for stringent regulation to ensure that the production of all goods does not harm humans or their environments or communities.

A crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic should serve as a wake-up call for the bosses of capital. The neoliberal model of economic development – capitalism on steroids – is failing all around us, and its failings have been shown most clearly by the capitalist system's inability to cope with such a shock. The frailty of a system which divorces people's means of consumption from their means of production has become exposed. If capitalism recovers from this shock, it will only be until the next shock exposes again its unsustainability. It cannot continue to recover indefinitely. A new model based on de-growth, the marriage of local production and consumption, and the valuation of human and environmental wellbeing rather than financial accumulation, is urgently needed if humanity is going to advance into the 22<sup>nd</sup> century with a planet in reasonably productive and healthy shape. ♦



# Drug trafficking in Central America affected by Covid-19: implications for local development issues

By ENCA member Martin Mowforth

In May 2020, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) issued a 'living' research brief – 'living' suggesting that it is subject to daily change – entitled 'COVID-19 and the drug supply chain: from production and trafficking to use'.

Among other things the report suggests that the restrictions on and reductions of legitimate economic activities are also causing restrictions on and changes in drug trafficking routes and practices. This is particularly the case of drug trafficking by air which "is likely to be completely disrupted by the restrictions imposed on air travel."

Before the UNODC report was made public, the Financial Times (7 May 2020) had already reported that traffickers were switching to parallel routes, loading their drugs on "submarines or speedboats or offloading [them] on beaches in Central America." Land routes, however, have also been hit by the virus, particularly because legitimate land transport has also been drastically reduced. This leaves maritime

routes as increasing in importance for the traffickers.

One worrying implication of these changes is that drug production in Central America may be stimulated by the difficulties being experienced by the major producing countries. As Ricardo Flores points out in the Salvadoran daily paper *La Prensa Gráfica* (11 May 2020), in the last decade Honduras has become a narco-state with a proliferation of drug-producing laboratories transforming the coca leaf into cocaine. The danger here is that the stimulation of more local production will transform Central America from purely a transit route for drugs into a major producer area too. The Salvadoran paper, however, adds that this is unlikely to affect El Salvador as it is a small, densely populated country leaving little room for the production of a coca crop.

An even more worrying aspect of the pandemic is that the loss of employment by so many people could potentially push some or many of them, especially the poor, into involving themselves in the

distribution of drugs. In El Salvador, for instance, numerous transport workers, especially boatmen, have been prosecuted for drug trafficking. Authorities have warned that the most likely people to be diverted from their usual economic activity into drug trafficking are artisanal fisherfolk.

The UNODC is also concerned that drug traffickers are trying to improve their image among the general population by providing services, especially to vulnerable groups, who might then be expected to, and possibly willing to, comply with traffickers' requests or demands.

#### Sources:

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Schipani, Long and Webber (7 May 2020) 'Cocaine trade caught in disrupted global supply chains' *Financial Times*.

Ricardo Flores (11 May 2020) 'Covid-19 motiva a narcotraficantes a utilizar más la vía marítima: ONU' *La Prensa Gráfica*.



# Updates on COVID-19 in Central America

By Martin Mowforth

By most accounts the most reliable statistics on the incidence of COVID-19 in the America is the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO). Any statistics given here will rapidly become out-of-date as the situation changes, but we start this brief update with PAHO's 8<sup>th</sup> July (2020) statistics on COVID-19 in Central America.

It is also worth noting that few if any governments have reliable statistics about COVID-19 deaths and new cases, in part due to the definitions of causes of death, in part due to the confusion of causes for those already suffering health problems, in part due to the lag time in reporting of cases, and in part due to governmental tendencies to downplay data that may be seen as bad for the image.

The most recent and urgent causes for concern are the cases of Honduras and Guatemala. After reporting 23 more deaths from 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> July, Guatemala became the first Central American country to record more than 1,000 deaths from COVID-19. A recent headline in *El Economista* suggested that the Honduran capital city Tegucigalpa is set to become the next epicentre of Covid-19 in Central America due to a sudden rapid increase in cases there. Doctors expressed alarm about the

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Rate of infection per 100,000 population
Panamá	58,864	1,275	1,364
Guatemala	45,053	1,734	252
Honduras	38,438	1,098	388
El Salvador	14,630	400	226
Costa Rica	14,600	98	287
Nicaragua	3,004	108	45
Belize	48	2	12
Central America	174,637	4,715	-

COVID-19 effects in Central America by country, 26 July 2020

Data from PAHO, as at 26.07.20: [Paho-covid19-response-who.hub.arcgis.com/app/a9726735cdda4166bbf8233e9bd7783e](https://paho-covid19-response-who.hub.arcgis.com/app/a9726735cdda4166bbf8233e9bd7783e)

increase in cases and called for urgent government action to increase testing capacity. They also suggested that all those with the virus should be hospitalised but at the same time described the hospitals as being in a state of collapse and the population doing all they could to avoid going to hospitals. The Honduran authorities temporarily closed at least six popular markets to improve biosecurity measures. Honduran doctors have also threatened to close the hospitals if the government failed to close the textile sweat shops (*maquilas*).

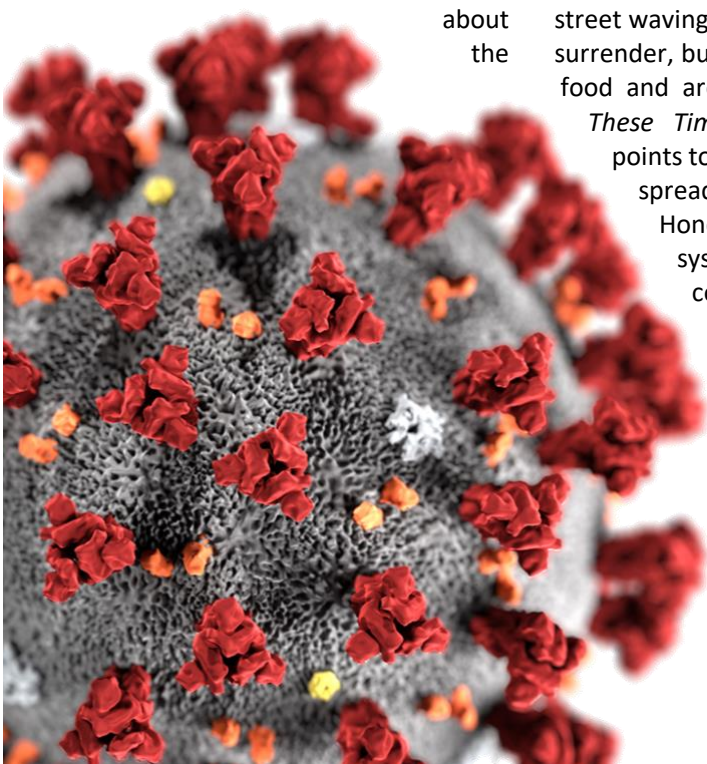
At the best of times, Guatemala has a 60 per cent poverty rate and suffers high levels of malnutrition. These are the worst of times and many people stand out on the street waving white flags, not as a mark of surrender, but as a sign that they have no food and are hungry. In a report in *In These Times*, Meghan Kreusch also points to a pandemic of hunger. "The spread of COVID-19 is terrifying in Honduras, where the healthcare system has been decimated by corruption and defunding. But when I talked to contacts in Honduras, the first concern on their mind was hunger." The strict lockdown since March has meant an "almost total restriction of poor people's ability to go out and seek work, while the wealthy and people connected to the current

government seem able to flout the order at will."

At the start of the pandemic Panamá certainly suffered more than the rest of Central America. The country is now beginning to ease restrictions on economic activity (through six phases), an easing justified by the authorities by the fall in the death rate and increase in the recovery rate. ENCA's contact in the Centre for Environmental and Social Development (CENDAH) reported to us (8<sup>th</sup> July) that the lockdown in Panamá still means that women can leave the house on Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays and men can leave the house on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Also beginning a slow opening of the economy is El Salvador; but here too there are warnings of hospitals under severe pressure and morgues which have ceased operating or have 'collapsed' under the number of corpses. On 19<sup>th</sup> June doctors in the General Hospital of the Salvadoran Institute of Social Security briefly went on strike to denounce the lack of a care plan for emergencies. *La Prensa Gráfica* included photos of patients with tanks of oxygen in beds in corridors and "almost in the car park". As in other countries, the official death toll has been disputed by doctors and government critics and is believed by some to be much higher than the official Ministry of Health figures.

Nicaragua is the only country in the region not to have ordered a full lockdown of its population, and for this it has become a >>





target for attack by its opponents both inside and outside the country. The polarization between the government and its supporters on the one hand and the opposition on the other is almost as extreme as it was in the 'coup' or 'uprising' of the three months from April 2018; and it is just as difficult to be sure about which version of events approaches anything like the truth as it was during the 2018 troubles, as described by ENCA in articles in ENCA 74 (November 2018) and ENCA 75 (April 2019). Much of the argument revolves around the numbers of deaths which the opposition claims to be censored by the government. In its turn the opposition has produced figures almost twenty times the government data. Government supporters have debunked many of the deaths on the opposition's lists and have shown them to be fake statistics, but there remains widespread doubt about the government figures too. One of the more measured articles to address this argument that has appeared recently is that of Quitzé Valenzuela-Stookey in the NACLA online updates (North American Congress on Latin America) – see sources below for reference. It is important to bear in mind that Nicaragua's approach to its public health service is rather different from that of the region's other countries. It is geared strongly towards alleviating the other

pandemics of poverty and malnutrition, and as such its strategy takes the medics to the communities and the households rather than or as well as providing centralised treatment to which people must travel. In the case of Covid-19 such a strategy may be misguided, but it seems unlikely to be any worse than the badly coordinated, unprepared, bungling strategies pursued by many western capitalist countries.

Costa Rica has temporarily suspended the third phase of its re-opening of the economy due to an unexpected spike of 119 new cases on 19<sup>th</sup> June. This was the country's highest number of daily registered new cases since the pandemic began. The third phase allowed for the opening of churches, museums and other organisational meetings up to a maximum of 75 persons with a distance of 1.8 meters between them. The Minister of Health, Daniel Salas, also suspended the Costa Rica football cup final until further notice even though it was to be played without crowd participation. A brief comment on the situation of the pandemic in Costa Rica is provided by Roland Spendingwimmer from the village of Longo Mañ – see contribution by Roland on next page.

Belize closed most of its ports of entry apart from its one international airport

and the Santa Elena terrestrial border crossing. Foreign nationals cannot enter the country, although the restrictions on Belizeans travelling between municipalities have now been eased. The curfew between 8 pm and 5 am remains in force. Hotels remain open but are not allowed to take international bookings.

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La Prensa Gráfica, 19 June 2020 'Costa Rica suspende tercera fase de apertura por récord de casos diarios de coronavirus'.

Nan McCurdy, 15 June 2020 'US-Led Nicaraguan Opposition Inflates COVID-19 Death Lists', Popular Resistance.

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Mirna Velásquez, 21 June 2020 'Hospitales desbordados por pacientes de covid-19 en El Salvador', La Prensa Gráfica.

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*The coffin with the body of a patient who died with symptoms of the new coronavirus, COVID-19, is carried by relatives to be buried at the Oriental Cemetery, in Managua [AFP]*

## COVID-19 in Costa Rica

*Received 5 July from Roland Spendlingwimmer of Cooperative Longo Maï (written mid-June).*

It seems that the government is determined to open international air traffic on 1st August 2020. Despite current infection rates increasing, they deem it is an economic priority to open up due to losses being catastrophic for Costa Rica.

While in the first 4 months the government decreed quarantine, everyone adhered to this and stayed at home – even during Easter, a traditionally important time for families to spend together.

State Aid was organised for all on low incomes in the form of family food packages. With this strategy, infections were kept low. But now, it seems they will reopen, factories, businesses, because they say this cannot be maintained.

So now, there are about 350 new infections daily. This is increasing, and it is known that within 10 days the health system will no longer be able to cope with any more new cases; a great worry. Infections are increasing, especially in slums and poorer areas. It is the least protected population, many who live together in confined spaces with little income, in metropolitan areas, and the belt around San José.

In the countryside it is very different and pleasing to see that in these strange times of coronavirus a peasant (campesino) community like Longo Maï continues almost the same, with its rhythm in nature and agriculture, having coffee at 3 in the afternoon ... and there is an increasing amount of awareness around self-subsistence, seen in the planting of vegetables and crops to achieve even more autonomy. When I walked through the community last week I was so impressed. Everywhere new greenhouses, and more corn-fields and beans planted.

Many families have commented that since the children have been at home, and not going to school, it is an opportunity to get

closer to them. They go out with their parents to work in the fields, spend free time at the river, and take time to talk and play. They reflect that after this crisis we should perhaps continue a little in this dynamic.

The great advantage for them is that they can increase their food autonomy as Longo Maï still has the reserves of the land.

## Welcome to Longo Maï

*Roland Spendlingwimmer (father of Jiri – see page 10) has written a poem about the village of Longo Maï in southern Costa Rica which has featured occasionally in ENCA Newsletters and which has been visited by numerous ENCA members.*

### English

Forty years to live, dispute, struggle and celebrate  
Community, peoples from all corners  
Of all languages,  
Nahuatl, Lencas, Mayan  
Chorotegas, Bribris, Cabecares, Teribes  
and Borucas  
Mühlviertler, Basler and Appenzeller

This paradise has thousands of corners  
And great stones, deep waters and trees  
Chirricanos, Namastes, Ceibos,  
Guyacanes and Targuas  
And pigs, chickens, monkeys  
And birds of all colours and butterflies,  
Tepescuintles and coatis.

If your friend wants to join us  
Welcome, there is a bed for you  
There is room for you and yours  
And all with good will.

But the others who want to take away  
The rivers, trees and beans  
Our resistance and anger will know

A hug, forests, fields, pastures and gardens  
We celebrate together  
Maize, cassava and vines,  
Lion, tapirs and iguana.  
Welcome to Paradise!

### Español

Bienvenida en Longo Maï  
Cuarenta años vivir, disputar, luchar y festejar  
Comunidad, hombres de todos los Rincones  
De todas las lenguas, Nahuatl, Lencas, Mayas  
Chorotegas, Bribris, Cabecares, Teribes y Borucas  
Mühlviertler, Basler y Appenzeller.  
Este paraíso tiene miles de esquinas  
Y grandes piedras, aguas hondas y árboles  
Chirricanos, Namastes, Ceibos, Guyacanes y Targuas  
Y chanchos, gallinas, monos  
Y pájaros de todos los colores Y mariposas,  
Tepescuintles y pizotes.

Si tu amigo quieres estar con nosotros  
Bienvenido, hay una cama para ti  
Hay campo para ti y los tuyos  
Y todos de buena voluntad.

Pero los otros que nos quieren quitar  
Los ríos, árboles y frijoles  
Nuestra ira y resistencia van a conocer.  
Un abrazo, bosques, campos, pastos y jardines  
Festejamos juntos  
Maíz, yuca y bejucos,  
León, Tapir y leguan.  
Bienvenidas en el paraíso!





# Amanda, Cristóbal and Godzilla

## El Salvador battered – not just by COVID-19

By ENCA member Martin Mowforth

As if COVID-19 has not caused enough damage and trauma in El Salvador, the first week of June dealt the country a few hammer blows from other sources. First, Tropical Storm Amanda, then Tropical Storm Cristóbal, followed by a dust storm from the Sahara Desert that became labelled as the 'Godzilla Cloud'.

Tropical Storm Amanda caused 30 deaths and damaged 3,000 houses. A total of about 150,000 people were affected and 12,000 displaced into over 200 relief camps. About 200 schools were also badly damaged leading to school closures in some cases. The tally of damage also included 100 health centres, 846 landslides, 600 incidences of flooding, 3 collapsed bridges, 20 collapsed walls, 12 unstable lahars and 300 fallen trees. Additionally 350 manzanas of sugar cane were badly affected.

In Guatemala officials reported two deaths due to Storm Amanda and at least three people were killed in Honduras

which reported landslides and flooding in several parts of the country. It has been estimated that in El Salvador Storm Amanda dropped 10% of the country's annual rainfall in just a very few days.

Amanda was hotly pursued by Cristóbal. Tropical Storm Cristóbal was the earliest third storm ever recorded for the North Atlantic storm season. It affected especially Guatemala, El Salvador and southern Mexico, and led to yet more damaging rainfall and several more deaths.

A few days later in June the Caribbean, Central America and the southern US states were badly affected by a 3,500 mile long dust storm from the Sahara. This type of storm occurs frequently between spring and autumn and generally moves across the Atlantic to the Americas. On this occasion the dust was thicker and more extensive than usual and was dubbed the 'Godzilla dust storm'.

Godzilla affected the Caribbean region and the southern US states more severely than Central America, but the effects in El Salvador were serious enough for the Salvadoran Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources to recommend the wearing of glasses and masks outside and for people with respiratory problems to stay indoors to prevent exposing themselves to the dust.

### Sources

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National Aeronautics and Space Administration (USA), various.

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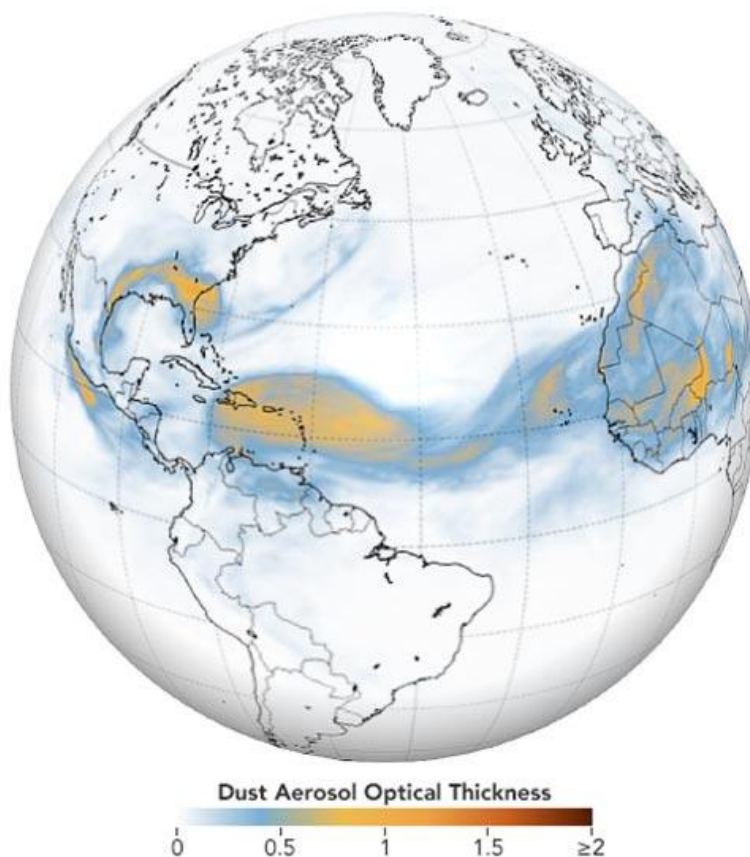
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Evelyn Machuca (05.06.20) '7 días de lluvias en El Salvador dejan 3 mil viviendas afectadas y 12 mil albergados', *La Prensa Gráfica*.

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## CIS appeal to support victims of Amanda Storm and COVID-19 in El Salvador

CIS is delivering emergency food aid to communities affected by COVID19 as well as those further affected by Hurricane Amanda. CIS, a long-term ally of ENCA, is seeking emergency donations to help in support those most in need.

Your donation will help CIS to buy food and other urgent needs of the affected families Victims of Tropical Storm Amanda in El Salvador and COVID-19. Each package of basic food and sanitary supplies costs \$50 and will feed a family for two weeks and provide cleaning supplies for one month. (Food items include beans, rice, sugar, oil, salt, coffee, tuna, oatmeal, pasta, pasta sauce, and cookies. Cleaning items include bleach, laundry soap, bathing soap, and sanitizing gel.)

The CIS' goal is to raise \$50,000 to cover 1,000 families. To date we have reached over half our goal and we have already delivered packages to over 500 families:

- \$2,500 will cover a community of 50 families
- \$1,000 will cover 20 families
- \$50 will cover one family

No donation is too big or too small. Instructions for donating are below.

Please send tax-deductible donations to:  
LOS OLIVOS CIS  
PO BOX 76  
WESTMONT, IL 60559

Or on-line through

Paypal: [https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=s-xclick&hosted\\_button\\_id=Y3SAPS7UD79NA&source=url](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=s-xclick&hosted_button_id=Y3SAPS7UD79NA&source=url)

Click on donation type and hit **COVID-19 DONATION or EMERGENCY FUND.**

**If you would like more information or learn about specific needs in a particular community, contact us:** [director@cis-elsalvador.org](mailto:director@cis-elsalvador.org) or [info@cis-elsalvador.org](mailto:info@cis-elsalvador.org)

## News of the CKDnt epidemic – and PREP



ENCA Newsletter No. 77 (November 2019) included news of research being conducted by La Isla Network (LIN) along with the San Antonio Sugar Mill in Chichigalpa, Nicaragua, under an initiative called *Adelante* funded by two German organisations. The aim of the initiative is to validate and adapt new work practices which would help sugarcane workers avoid or reduce the risk of contracting CKDnt (chronic kidney disease of non-traditional sources) as a result of their work in searing temperatures, with little shade and insufficient water.

The *Adelante* Initiative is a workplace intervention focused on providing adequate measures such as water, rest, shade, and improved ergonomics to prevent CKDnt among sugarcane workers in Nicaragua. LIN is concentrating its efforts in the sugarcane sector due to the high prevalence of the disease. The results from the initiative will be adapted to other geographies and industries.

Now we have news that La Isla Network (LIN) is a recipient of a Belmont Forum grant for the project 'Prevention Resilience Efficiency and Protection' (PREP) for workers in industrial agriculture in a changing climate. The Belmont Forum is a partnership of funding organisations, international science councils, and regional consortia committed to the advancement of science.

PREP will use the results of the *Adelante* Initiative to investigate:

1. the immediate and long-term impact the intervention has on workforce health (kidney health and heat-related injuries) and productivity;
2. the economic and social impacts on those affected by the disease and whether our intervention aids resilience, which includes mitigating migration pressures;
3. the economic burden on health systems treating CKDnt;
4. an analysis of public health policies to understand what specific policies, or absence of them, have contributed to CKDnt, while investigating what policies are required to effectively address the disease.

The PREP Project aims to strengthen protections for worker's health by building on the *Adelante* Initiative.

The lay summary of LIN's most recent publication is now available:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/17BBcQPUn0M0ZbKsLsrmla1bi7l\\_PUByD/view?usp=sharing&mc\\_cid=29497377df&mc\\_eid=\[UNIQID\]](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17BBcQPUn0M0ZbKsLsrmla1bi7l_PUByD/view?usp=sharing&mc_cid=29497377df&mc_eid=[UNIQID])

For more information on PREP, please visit:

[https://prepforworkers.org?mc\\_cid=29497377df&mc\\_eid=\[UNIQID\]](https://prepforworkers.org?mc_cid=29497377df&mc_eid=[UNIQID])

Other LIN, CKDnt and PREP videos:

[https://vimeo.com/420478294?mc\\_cid=29497377df&mc\\_eid=\[UNIQID\]](https://vimeo.com/420478294?mc_cid=29497377df&mc_eid=[UNIQID])

[https://www.icij.org/investigations/island-widows/worker-safety-program-slashes-rates-of-chronic-kidney-disease/?mc\\_cid=29497377df&mc\\_eid=\[UNIQID\]](https://www.icij.org/investigations/island-widows/worker-safety-program-slashes-rates-of-chronic-kidney-disease/?mc_cid=29497377df&mc_eid=[UNIQID])

LIN website: [laislanetwork.org](http://laislanetwork.org)



# PANDEMICS, HUNGER AND FOOD PRODUCTION

*We asked Helen Yuill, ENCA member and Coordinator of the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, to tell us more about the work of the Rural Worker's Association (ATC) in Nicaragua which was featured in ENCA 77 (November 2019). Her article below is inspired by the work of the ATC and the global movement of La Via Campesina in promoting food systems which are resilient to the current and future pandemics.*

"This deadly virus has exposed the vulnerability of the globalised food system, dominated by industrial agriculture, and the dangers it poses to all life forms. We must learn from this crisis and invest in building local, resilient and diverse food systems." (La Vía Campesina).

La Vía Campesina (LVC) is a global movement of over 200 million peasant farmers, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and pastoralists. For nearly 30 years LVC has been calling for profound political and structural transformation globally to a food system based on access for everyone to healthy and affordable food; that values workers and producers; that localises supply chains; and that uses agroecological, sustainable farming methods that respect people and the planet.

As the immensity of the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds the predictions of the UN and other international agencies warn of the cataclysmic consequences for so many already impoverished by past international failures to address gross inequalities and chronic poverty. In April, World Food Programme director David Beasley warned that "there is a real danger that more people could potentially die from the economic impact of COVID-19 than from the virus itself."

A July report by UNICEF, FAO, WFP and WHO on global food security warned that an additional 130 million could face chronic hunger by the end of 2020.

In this context, these reports call for "not only urgent action to address the hunger crisis but also to take the opportunity to shift to more

sustainable food systems." (UN General Secretary Antonio Gutierrez.) Other reports echo the calls of the LVC for resilience, developing local supply chains, self-sufficiency, and agricultural production methods that protect people and the planet.

Nicaragua, as the second most impoverished country in the Americas after Haiti, faces major challenges not only from the virus but also from the anticipated downturn in the economy greatly exacerbated by US sanctions.

On the other hand, however, particularly compared with other countries in the region, Nicaragua has a much higher level of resilience to withstand the impact. The country has a well-integrated, holistic commitment to achieving food sovereignty involving government agencies working alongside rural and urban communities.

The Ministry of the Family, Community, and Cooperative Economy (MEFCCA) and municipal governments work with

farmers to improve access to local markets while technical institutes organise community seed banks and provide technical training. These government agencies working together with communities and social movements have enabled the country to achieve 80% self-sufficiency in basic food including all of the beans, maize, fruit, vegetables, honey and dairy products that it consumes.

The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign is working in solidarity with the Rural Workers Association (ATC, a member organisation of LVC) on their programme of agroecology, food sovereignty, land rights, climate justice, gender equality and the involvement of young people in farming. For information about webinars, videos, and articles highlighting the work of the ATC, see [www.nicaraguasc.org.uk](http://www.nicaraguasc.org.uk)

<https://viacampesina.org/en/asociacion-de-trabajadores-del-campo-atc/>



# Jehry Rivera murder trial

Contributed by Jiri Spendlingwimmer, Costa Rican anthropologist.  
Translated by ENCA member Liz Richmond, who contributed extra material.

Our main story in ENCA 78 was a report of the assassination of Jehry Rivera Rivera, an indigenous land defender in Costa Rica. We recently received news of the case from Jiri Spendlingwimmer a resident of the village of Longo Mai in southern Costa Rica. We are grateful to Jiri and to ENCA member Liz Richmond for extra information and for the translation.

Jehry Rivera was assassinated by several shots from a firearm on 24 February 2020 in the indigenous territory of Térraba, Buenos Aires, in the Southern Zone of Costa Rica. The previous night 150 to 200 non-indigenous farmers had organised and formed a mob to surround the town of Térraba, burned land, insulted, harassed and attacked a group of indigenous people who had recovered their ancestral territory. The following table summarises the acts of violence against indigenous people in the southern zone of Costa Rica around the town of Buenos Aires.

Given the incapacity and bias of the Courts of Justice of Buenos Aires, the judicial process for the murder of Jehry Rivera was assigned to a prosecutor in the capital, San José. It is expected that at some point a trial will be held. Today, however, there are no accused, nor a date for the start of the trial. The same impunity was evident regarding the murder of human rights defender and indigenous leader Sergio Rojas in Bribri de Salitre territory, assassinated in March 2019 - <https://theviolenceofdevelopment.com/costa-rican-indigenous-rights-defender-murdered/>

## Escalation of violence against indigenous land reclaimers

Ditsö group, Costa Rica, report that between February and March 2020 there has been an escalation in violence against land rights defenders in four indigenous territories: Térraba, China Kichá, Salitre and Cabagra. The Cabécares indigenous people of China Kichá have suffered violent incidents including death threats, mob assaults, detonations of firearms, invasions in recovered land, fires, road blockades, physical assaults and chemical attack.

To illustrate the fact that these are not just recent tensions and incidents, it is worth recalling that in 2013 Jehry suffered a brutal attack for lodging a complaint regarding illegal felling of trees and deforestation in their territory - <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/c-omplicity-and-silence-taking-land-indigenous-peoples-costa-rica>

The Costa Rican State, which is at the centre of national and international criticism, has had to make greater effort to

Type of incident	Number
Security incidents	39
Acts of violence	66
Assassinations	1
Leaders threatened with death	10

Violent incidents against indigenous people in 4 regions (Specifically in Térraba, China Kichá, Salitre and Cabagra in the south of Costa Rica) from 23 February to 23 March 2020

try to settle the historical debt with the indigenous peoples and resolve the conflict. In China Kichá, in May 2020, direct intervention was necessary by the Deputy Minister of Public Security Eduardo Solano to guarantee the removal of livestock from a reclaimed farm and to calm the situation.

# Remittances to the Northern Triangle of Central America

Whilst the business world (in the form of CentralAmericaData.com) reported record increases in remittances sent to Central American countries for January and February this year and forecast a good year for remittances in 2020, at that time the effects of the pandemic had not been foreseen.

In the first two months of 2020 remittances from the US to Guatemala increased by 19% over the first two months of 2019; for El Salvador, the equivalent figure was 10% and Honduras 13%.

The importance of remittances to the national economy cannot be overstated. In Guatemala remittances generally account for 14% of the country's GDP; in Honduras and El Salvador, the equivalent figure is 20%. For many families remittances are often vitally significant for the household economy.

The next three months saw a dramatic fall in remittances to these three countries, around 20% down on the corresponding 2019 figure for Guatemala in April and around 40% in El Salvador and 29% in Honduras. Guatemala witnessed a reversal of the downward slide in the month of June and many families around the region must be hoping for a similar reversal of the trend in Honduras and El Salvador.

Data from CentralAmericaData.com and from the Central Reserve Bank as given in El Economista 'Recepción de remesas en El Salvador cayó 40% en abril' by Javier Orellano, 15 May 2020.



# Obituary: Dr Candy González

Candy González, an American lawyer who became a major force for environmental justice in Belize, died aged 75 on 24<sup>th</sup> May this year. Often referred to as “an environmental warrior”, Candy founded and led several Belizean environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Belize Institute of Environmental Law and Policy (BELPO), the Belize Coalition to Save Our National Heritage and the Belize Alliance of Conservation NGOs (BACONGO).

She became an outspoken driver of the campaign to save the Macal River from a series of dams built along its course, especially the notorious Chalillo Dam. In doing so she took on the Belize Department of the Environment and the electricity producers and distributors BECOL/Fortis. Even after the dam was built, she maintained her campaign, notably with a huge sign outside her house denouncing the dam and those who ordered and built it – see photo. To the last she never ceased to expose the damages caused to the Macal and other Belizean rivers by dams and other forms of pollution.

Candy practiced law in the United States where she was often found on the front lines of the civil rights movement. She moved to Belize with her husband George in 1994 and very soon became a force for the defence of the country's natural

environment. As well as her role in defence of Belizean rivers, she can be credited with the implementation of an indefinite moratorium on offshore oil exploration, thereby offering an important degree of protection for the world's second largest coral reef. She was also vociferous in her opposition to fracking in terrestrial oil exploration.

She was instrumental in the creation of a position for a NGO representative to sit in the Senate, after which she continued to work on strengthening the coordination between Belizean NGOs. She believed strongly in the conduct and use of research to support her campaigns and her work was always well documented. She helped put together the ‘Guide to Public Participation’ which has been translated into several different languages. The guide stresses the importance of Belizeans being fully involved in all aspects of decision-making about use of the country's natural resources. She and husband George wrote numerous published articles on the territorial conflict between Belize and



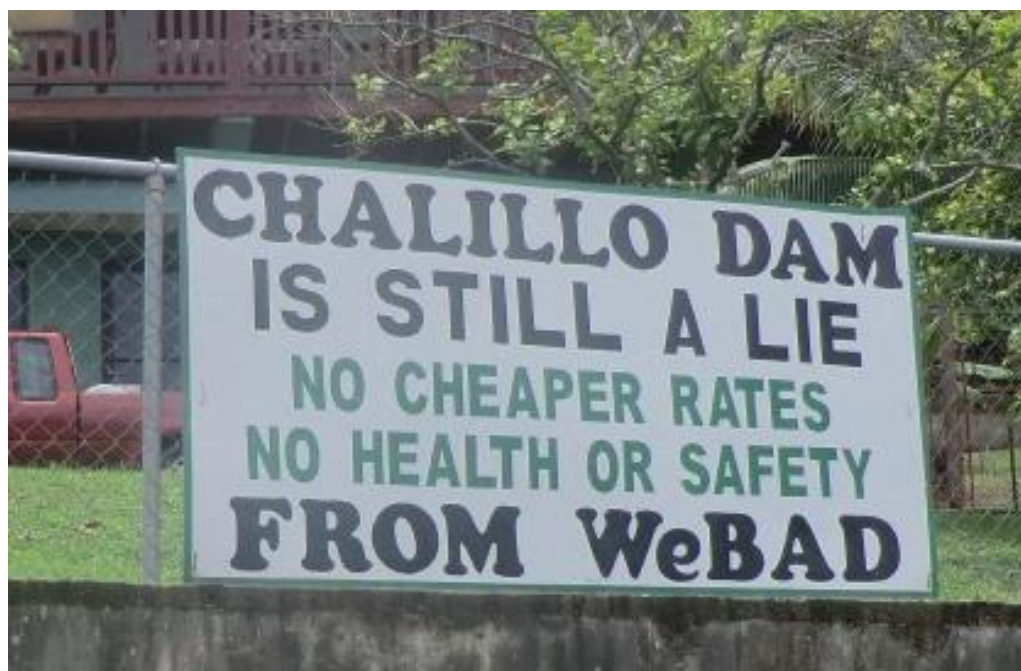
*Photo: Martin Mowforth*

Guatemala, participated in many local environmental initiatives and served on the National Environmental Appraisal Committee.

Candy was known to ENCA through her comments on various environmental problems which affected Belize. Most recently we included her comments on the ENCA 77 article entitled ‘The Environment in Belize: Little Rain; Stagnant, Polluted Rivers: Dengue’ (November 2019). She had also agreed to talk to the ENCA Tour Group planned for August/September this year before the postponement of the tour due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A 2013 interview with Candy and George can be heard on The Violence of Development website at: <https://theviolenceofdevelopment.com/interview-with-candy-and-george-gonzalez/>.

Candy will be sadly missed by Belizeans who in future years can continue to thank her for many safeguards of Belize's environment.

Martin Mowforth







## Rio Coco UNESCO Global Geopark

Paris, 10 July—UNESCO's Executive Board has approved the designation of 15 new UNESCO Global Geoparks, which brings the number of sites participating in the Global Geoparks Network to 161 in 44 countries.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. Their bottom-up approach of combining conservation with sustainable development while involving local communities is becoming increasingly popular. At present, there are 161 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 44 countries. A webpage of each UNESCO Global Geopark is available, with detailed information on each site.

UNESCO's work with geoparks began in 2001. In 2004, 17 European and 8 Chinese geoparks came together at UNESCO headquarters in Paris to form the Global Geoparks Network (GGN)

where national geological heritage initiatives contribute to and benefit from their membership of a global network of exchange and cooperation.

On 17 November 2015, the 195 Member States of UNESCO ratified the creation of a new label, the UNESCO Global Geoparks, during the 38th General Conference of the Organisation. This expresses governmental recognition of the importance of managing outstanding geological sites and landscapes in a holistic manner.

The Organisation supports Member States' efforts to establish UNESCO Global Geoparks all around the world, in close collaboration with the Global Geoparks Network.

On 10th July 2020, UNESCO Global Geoparks were designated for the first time in Nicaragua, the Russian Federation and Serbia. A description of the Río Coco Global Geopark is given below.

Located in the north of Nicaragua, Río Coco is part of the volcanic Central Mountainous Chain featuring a landscape of rolling hills and plains with small valleys. The elevated and broken topography of the area offers lookout points and panoramic views of a range of ongoing tectonic phenomena, in a landscape of wetlands, highland springs and cloud forests. The territory is home to three emblematic trees: the almond tree of 'Tere Armijo', the Branded Guapino tree, and the 500-year-old Golden Ceiba, sacred for the Mayan people. The area has a rich history, marked by Taguzgalpa heritage, with numerous pre-Hispanic settlements and a few examples of cave art. Spanish conquistadors established the Cuje gold mines in Río Coco and built the parish church of Santa María de Magdalena in Totogalpa (18th and 19th centuries).

<https://en.unesco.org/news/geopark-2020>

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### Meeting Dates 2020

**March 29<sup>th</sup> | June 21<sup>st</sup> | October 18<sup>th</sup>**

ENCA meetings are usually held at the NSC's office at the Durham Road Centre, London, N7 7DT. Meetings are held on Sundays from 12:30 pm to 5 pm and we start with lunch which is made up of whatever people attending choose to bring to share. **In light of COVID-19 meetings have been held online.** Information about the October meeting will be shared closer to the time