

# ENCA



Environmental Network *for* Central America

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## Costa Rica

A new era of environmentalism dawns? Or not?

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# CENDAH: RAISING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN PANAMA

See page 10



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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# A new era of environmental protection for Costa Rica

By ENCA member Lucy Goodman

This year Costa Rica has surpassed a reforestation target by achieving 75 per cent forest coverage after a low of 21 per cent in 1987. Since 2014, the country has satisfied more than 95 per cent of its energy demand from renewable sources; predominantly hydroelectric power ('renewable' but certainly not impact-free), and in 2017, the Costa Rican Institute of Electricity boasted a record-breaking 300 days of power supplied solely by renewables. Complete electrification of Costa Rica's buses and taxis is expected by 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement's net zero emissions target.

The country's exemplary role in nature conservation and dedication to climate change mitigation won it the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) '2019 Champions of the Earth Award'. The UNEP declared Costa Rica pioneers of sustainability and hopes other nations will emulate its decarbonisation template.

For a relatively small country of five million people, Costa Rica, ranked 126<sup>th</sup> by land area, has a big reputation for ecological and climatic stewardship. This environmental accolade may precede it, given that Costa Rica's marine territory is ten times larger than its terrestrial equivalent, and until recently management efforts have solely focused on the latter. The country ostensibly lags behind in marine and coastal protection. Key threats come from pollution and water contamination, the illegitimate development of coastal infrastructure, unregulated shipping and the illegal extraction of marine resources.

To start paying-off its historical debt to oceanic biodiversity, Costa Rica has added more than 11,000 km<sup>2</sup> to its charted marine management area. Four new zones: 1. Montes Submarinos, 2. Cabo Blanco, 3. Bahía Santa Elena, and 4. Barra Del Colorado only equate to less than 3

per cent of the country's marine territory under some level of protection. Although progressive, this figure falls short of the 10 per cent Costa Rica pledged to protect by this time. By contrast, 13,000 km<sup>2</sup> of Costa Rica's terrestrial area is protected; representing 25 per cent of the 30 per cent target. Each of the four marine protected areas (MPA) has unique characteristics and a high ecosystems service value:

1. **Montes Submarinos** is an oceanic mountain range, connected to the Galapagos Islands, which hosts sharks, rays, whales and is valued by migratory species, and fishermen
2. The Nicoya peninsula has a few protected turtle nesting beaches already. The continental shelf slopes rapidly here facilitating whale, dolphin and orca watching. **Cabo Blanco**, was also designated for its submarine coral and rocky reef habitats.
3. **The Saint Elena Bay area**, on the northern Pacific coast, also has valuable 'black coral' reefs and the country's oldest rock formations.
4. The case for **Barra del Colorado**, in the northern Caribbean, was made because of its coastal lagoon and channel network which supports a very high concentration of migratory birds, nesting sea turtles, sperm whales, manatees and tarpon, a valued species for sport fishers.

These new marine protected areas incorporate a governance system and local training programmes. To promote ecosystem recovery, the MPAs support ecotourism initiatives and local marine tour operators through creation of business and management plans, improved internet access, family-run inns and endorsing fishing in combination with less invasive activities (e.g. snorkelling).

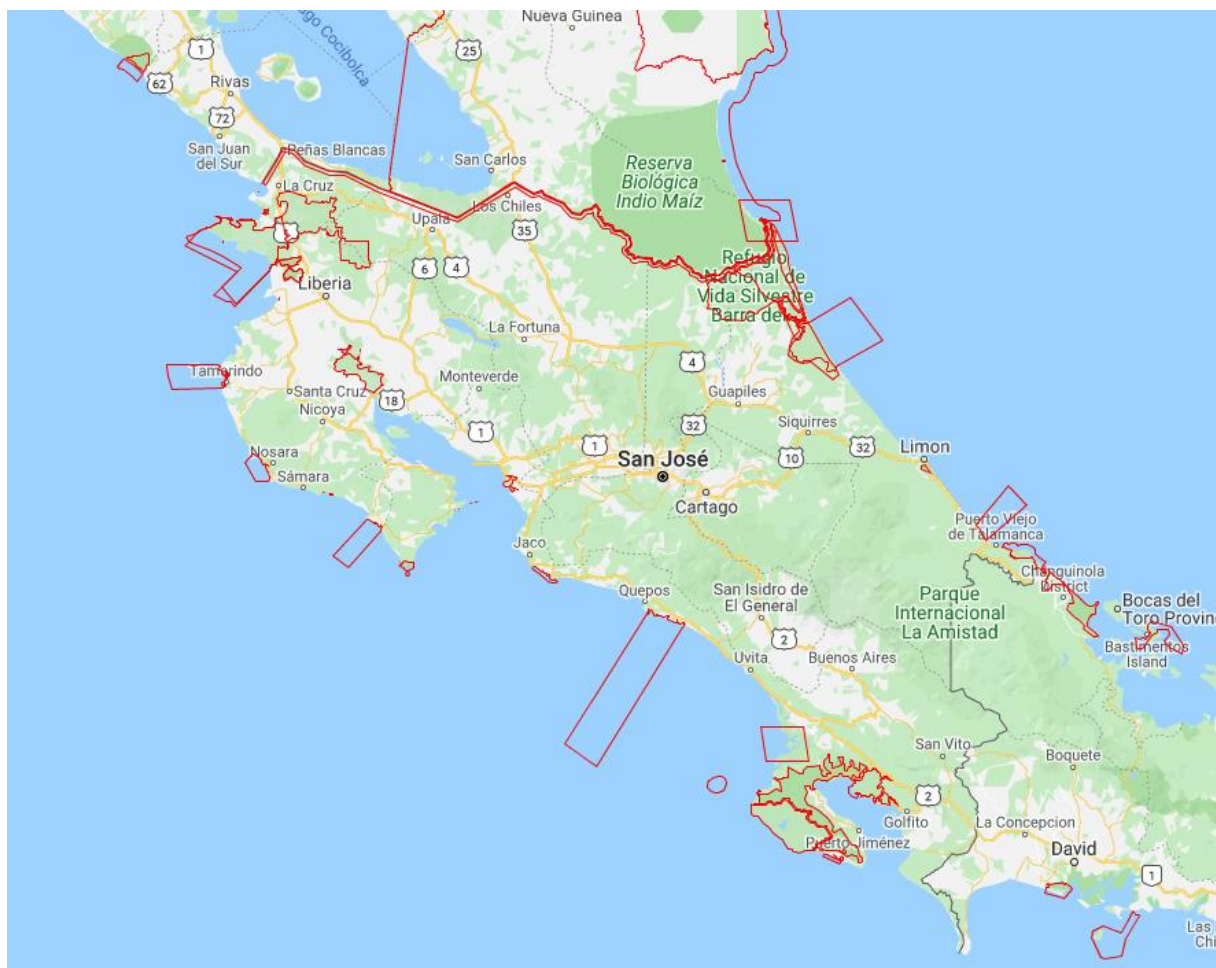
The 'Costa Rica Forever Association' encourages the government, private sector and civil society to fulfil the country's environmental commitments.

Director Zdenka Piskulich said “We may not have reached 30 per cent conservation, but what we are protecting, we are doing well and that is what we, as a country, can showcase to the world.”

Central America has a half century of experience with MPAs; the first official designation was Peninsula de Cosigüina on Nicaragua’s Pacific coast in 1958.

An assessment by Carlos Espinosa in 2018 identified almost 200 sites in Central America purposefully created to protect oceanic and coastal habitats – although very few are official MPAs and there is dubious variability in their governance and management. A breakdown of these areas per country has Belize with 86, Panama with 45, Costa Rica with 24, Honduras with 23, Nicaragua with 8, Guatemala with 7 and El Salvador with 4.

Whilst a handful of strategies have been successful, historically most protected areas in the region have not achieved a high level of success, and governments have failed to meet targets. Carlos Espinosa finds that “Poor rural people in Central America do not assign value to protected areas, since they fail to clearly perceive their services in the face of the rush to prosper in a degraded socioeconomic environment where too often the alternative is to fight to survive amid misery, corruption and crime (Dos Mares).” It is this lack of community prioritisation that currently inhibits MPA success in Central America. Dos Mares, resourced by Carlos himself, is a voluntary initiative that works with poor communities within the reserves to perceive their value and identify the opportunities that protected marine areas bring.



*Espinosa’s updated map of Central American MPAs now shows 40 sites in Costa Rica – a doubling since 2018. See: <https://bit.ly/3kmPov1>*

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2. Costa Rica expands its Marine Protection Area in defense of Biodiversity, *The Costa Rican News (TCRN)*, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020 (same article as EFE)
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5. [Costa Rica hits 300 days of clean power so far in 2017 - Energy Live News](https://www.energylivenews.com/2019/09/23/costa-rica-receives-uns-highest-environmental-honour/)
6. The MPAs of Central America: An introductory view of their successes, lessons learned, and ongoing challenges (Article 1 of 3) by Carlos A. Espinosa, May 17th 2018, *MPA News*.
7. Creating VALUE in the marine protected areas of Central America, *Dos Mares* <https://en.dosmares.org/>
8. *Dos Mares map of Central American MPAs*: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=10WJV3Du2i3Cm3vtoMwwmgRHTnwQ&ll=11.989579700050982per cent2C-87.42379949999999&z=6>
9. ‘Costa Rica’s Rainforest: How The Country Managed To Restore It’. *Special places of Costa Rica Newsletter*; <https://www.specialplacesofcostarica.com/costa-ricas-rainforest-how-the-country-managed-to-restore-it/>
10. Discover the world’s protected areas: <https://www.protectedplanet.net/en>

# Costa Rica and its environmentalism

## *Comment by ENCA editors.*

As well as the 2019 Champions of the Earth Award mentioned above by Lucy, Costa Rica has most recently been awarded The Earthshot Prize which is designed to repair nature on Planet Earth over the next decade. The initiative is supported by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. As ENCA members will no doubt be aware, the Republic of Costa Rica was awarded one of the five one million pound prizes for its programme to 'Protect and Restore Nature'. The programme's summary description is as follows:

Costa Rica was a country that once cleared most of its forests, but it has now doubled the number of trees and is seen as a role model for others to follow. The winning project is a scheme paying local citizens to restore natural ecosystems that has led to a revival of the rainforest.

It is important that ENCA acknowledges the valuable work of the projects that such

initiatives support and promote. Indeed, on a much smaller scale, ENCA aims to support and promote such schemes itself. But there are two critical points to make here.

First, local projects make a local difference, affecting individuals, households, communities and even regions. We also need to recognise that they may have a global impact in as much as they may serve as examples to be copied elsewhere in the world. But in order to fix the problems that nature is currently suffering, we need to fix the economic and political system which creates the problems in the first place, namely the set of neoliberal economic development policies promoted and imposed upon the majority world by the western world. Despite the great success of many local projects, the power and reach of violently imposed neoliberalism is likely to create environmental problems at a rate somewhat faster and deeper than local projects can solve them.

Second, While in some respects Costa Rica is justifiably held up as an example for others to follow, we also need to view the wider picture and to acknowledge that outside of its protected areas (and even inside in some cases) and its showcase environmental projects, the country is hell bent on giving over most of its agricultural land to export crops, thereby displacing its own population of small farmers; it is one of the highest users in the world of toxic pesticides; and whilst its labour laws on the statute book appear relatively liberal and healthy, in practice successive governments have done everything they can possibly do to encourage anti-union activity by agribusiness transnational corporations. As regards deforestation, we should also bear in mind that: "While the government publicises its campaign for extensive tree planting, aerial photographs of the pineapple expansions show the massive elimination of forested areas, even in protected river zones." (FANCA, 2010, 'FANCA Members Sign Testimony to the Arias Administration's Destructive Environmental Policy', <http://freshwateraction.net/> ).

## Eco-friendly loans in Costa Rica?

The National Bank of Costa Rica, the French Agency for Development and the European Union announced in August that they would make available a new line of credit to support environmentally friendly projects in Costa Rica.

A total of \$65 million would be divided into packets of \$50 million to support 'green credits' with an additional \$15 million for lesser projects. All projects funded would be associated with clean transport, renewable energy use, the search for energy efficiency and/or climate change adaptation measures.

The funding is intended for use by both businesses and individuals. So, for instance, it could be appropriate for a business that wants to renew its operations to make them more environmentally friendly. Equally, however, it could be used by individuals who wish to buy an electric car.

The National Bank's Director of Sustainability, Silvia Chaves Herra, said: "We're making available economic resources, fresh resources, which have come to the Bank from other international entities, to lever sustainable investments that allow our clients to access conditional finances to foster a transition towards a greener, more sustainable economy."

According to the Bank, two-thirds of its loan portfolio was directed to the productive sector, from micro, small, medium and large companies and it believes that: "it is crucial to encourage productive projects which generate responsible management of water, the application of a circular economy, the protection of national biodiversity, the construction of public works and eco-friendly buildings, sustainable urban transit and an infinity of other economic activities which comply with the requirement of reduced emissions."

### *ENCA editorial comment:*

It is of course encouraging to see banks adding sustainability and environmental sensitivity to their criteria for making loans, rather than applying a simple profit generation condition. But this initiative does not necessarily imply that the debt itself is a sustainable one. We are currently and regularly being warned that debt levels, especially in the southern world, are building up to unmanageable heights. In themselves, more loans are not necessarily the answer to the planet's problems. This may be a step in the right direction, but the planet needs sustainability for the sake of sustainability, not for the continuation of profit margins.

# Moves on marijuana in Central America

A summary by ENCA member Martin Mowforth

Over the last few months, the development of a medicinal marijuana industry in Central America has been advancing in Belize, Panama and Costa Rica.

In Belize in July the government tabled the Misuse of Drugs Bill 2021 in the House of Representatives. The Bill would establish provisions for the licensing and registration of operators in the cannabis industry. The Minister of Home Affairs Kareem Musa said that: "The consumer sees this as a relief. The small farmers, the investor, the businessman, they see this as a profit. The government sees this as only practical given the circumstances that we now face where we have something that is decriminalized but you have no way of obtaining it."

Belizeans can already use 10 grams of marijuana without penalty, but still people risk their lives bringing it in from Mexico and elsewhere. The situation creates conflict with the police and gang warfare in Belize City.

Belize's religious community, however, is highly critical of government liberation of laws controlling drug use and growth.

In Costa Rica in the first governmental debate deputies approved the regulation of the industrial sowing of medicinal and therapeutical marijuana. Although drug trafficking in Costa Rica is illegal and can carry harsh prison sentences, personal consumption is not penalized. 'Personal

consumption', however, is not defined in law at present.

One of the main proponents of the new law on marijuana is Zoila Rosa Volio who considers that there is a global market in marijuana worth over \$5 billion and that Costa Rica could be a part of this market by growing and exporting the crop. She also considers that Costa Rica is arriving late in the market and that the crop could improve the quality of life for many people.

In Costa Rica, however, the proposal still has a long way to go before entering into law. This includes a second debate in the legislature. Additionally, the Health Ministry and President Carlos Alvarado have both expressed concerns about legalizing marijuana, and their signatures will also be needed for it to become law.

In October Panamanian President Laurentino Cortizo signed into law the regulation of medicinal and therapeutical use of cannabis and its derivatives. The law was approved by the Parliament at the end of August. The law also creates a register of legitimate users and growers.

It is the first

Central American country to enact such a law.

Valid uses for the plant include medicine, veterinary work, scientific and research work. The cultivation of the plants and use of the seeds is also strictly controlled. President of the National Assembly or Parliament, Crispiano Adames, said that "the greatest beneficiaries will be those people who daily experience pain."

## Sources:

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# The return of hunger to Central America? It never went away.

As prepared by ENCA member Martin Mowforth for The Violence of Development website.

In July 2021, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations and the World Food Programme (WFP) warned that acute food insecurity is likely to increase in 23 countries in the next four months. The two organisations explained that violence, conflict, climate change and economic crisis will remain as the main drivers of acute food insecurity.

In Latin America, the two organisations named Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and El Salvador as the countries most likely to experience worsening levels of hunger. The Mesoamerican coordinator for the FAO, Adoniram Sanches (as it happens a Brazilian), was particularly concerned about the levels of hunger likely to be felt in the Dry Corridor of the Pacific coastal plain of Central America which over the last ten years has suffered numerous hurricanes, six prolonged droughts, various catastrophic floodings and a pandemic.

According to Sanches, the three Central American countries registering the

highest levels of hunger are El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, but conditions in the region's Dry Corridor also extend to cover Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. Some ten million people live in this corridor region and most of them are to some extent dependent on agriculture.

Sanches said that "the problem with hunger is not one of production but is rather one of economic access and the lack of resources to get food." The FAO and WFP regretted that efforts to combat a global surge in acute food insecurity are often hampered by political tensions and blockages, preventing families on the brink of famine from receiving assistance." Bureaucratic hurdles and lack of funding also slow the efforts of UN agencies to provide emergency food assistance.

The coordinator suggested that in Guatemala there is a large group of farmers producing coffee, watermelon and melon (all for export) but who do not have enough food for themselves. The FAO therefore needs to support

family farming. He also suggested that within the worst affected groups, there are smaller groups who are doubly affected, such as women, Indigenous peoples and those of Afro-descent.

In 2019 and 2020, the number of food insecure people worldwide increased from 135 million to 155 million. This situation is expected to worsen this year (2021).

## Sources

El Economista, 14 July 2021, 'Centroamérica vuelve a pasar hambre'.

Telesur Newsletter, 30 July 2021, 'Acute Food Insecurity To Increase in Colombia, Haiti and Guatemala'.

United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), 30 July 2021, 'Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity (August to November 2021 outlook)'.

*Note: Subscription to The Violence of Development website ([theviolenceofdevelopment.com](http://theviolenceofdevelopment.com)) is free. Just go to the website (as given in the brackets) and you will be asked if you wish to subscribe.*



## Half of Isla Guanaja destroyed by fire

More than half of the Honduran island of Guanaja was destroyed by a large fire in early October. Guanaja is one of the three islands generally known as The Bay Islands of Honduras and together they are widely seen and used as a major tourist destination, especially for those interested in diving.

El Heraldo described the fire variously as 'a catastrophe', 'apocalyptic' and 'uncontrollable'. Miraculously no lives were lost, although over 100 houses were destroyed with many more damaged. 120 families were left on the street and 400 people were evacuated from a population that ranges between 4,000 and 6,000. A majority of the houses on the island are made of wood which helped the fire to spread. Moreover the island does not have a fire service or emergency service and residents tried in vain to control the flames.

Eventually the Honduran Air Force flew in several helicopters which dropped water which helped stop the fire from spreading further. The fire started before dawn on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October and is thought to have been started accidentally. The island's deputy mayor, Mireya Guillén, said that the island was in need of water, food and oxygen tanks.

### Sources:

- Latin America News Dispatch, 04.10.21, 'Honduras' section.
- Fernando Maldonado, 04.10.21, 'Catástrofe: Se pierde media Isla de Guanaja tras pavoroso incendio', *El Heraldo*.
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## Boats endangering manatees in Belize

Manatees are often referred to as sea cows and are gentle, curious and unthreatening mammals with a face like that of a walrus. In South-East Asia they are called dugongs. There are several species of manatees. The sub-species that lives in coastal inlets around Belize is the Antillean manatee, and according to the United Nations and the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the Antillean manatees are in severe danger of extinction and are therefore a protected species.

Belize has the largest population of Antillean manatees in the world due to its coastline providing large amounts of plant life, especially seagrass, on which they live. The coastline is indented with inlets and tributaries providing the manatees with very warm water, ample food and many mangrove forests.

Belize has established several wildlife sanctuaries in order to protect manatees and other marine life, including Port Honduras Marine Reserve, Swallow Caye Wildlife Sanctuary, Southern Lagoon Wildlife Sanctuary, Bacalar Chico National Park and South Water Caye Marine Reserve.

Although not a protected area, Placencia Lagoon is one of the best places to see manatees. Unfortunately, during September this year there were three

reported deaths of manatees in the Placencia Lagoon area. It appeared that the three deaths were caused by boat strikes.

August to October is the most active period for manatee movement around the lagoon, but it is also a period of activity of tourist boats. The Crocodile Research Coalition (CRC) has issued a call for boat drivers to look out specifically for manatees. But the CRC has also said that the manatees are also threatened by pollution and loss of habitat as well as collision with boats. They also become entangled with fishing nets.

The CRC was established in 2016 and aims to preserve crocodiles and other animals and their environments in Central America in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of biodiversity in the region.

### Sources:

- Rubén Morales Iglesias, 30.09.21, 'Crocodile Research Coalition calls for boat drivers in Placencia Lagoon to look out for manatees', *Breaking Belize News*.
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- Crocodile Research Coalition website, <https://crocodileresearchcoalition.org/>

# Central American Countries Seek Aid To Fight Climate Change

Published 3 November 2021

*The following report relating to the position of Central American countries on the Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP26) was published in the Telesur Newsletter on 3<sup>rd</sup> November this year. Their terms and conditions allow us to reproduce the article here, for which we are grateful to Telesur. The piece was written at the beginning of COP26 and uses the future tense regarding the conference. We have left the article as it was written including its use of the future tense.*

**In one of its geopolitical reports, the United States placed Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua on a list of 11 countries with less capacity to adapt to the climate crisis.**

The countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA) will present a "unified position" at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP26) in order to raise more strongly their requests for international assistance.

In its capacity as temporary president of the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD), Guatemala will propose that COP26 declare Central America as one of the regions most vulnerable to climate change.

Although the Central American nations only generate 0.35 percent of CO2 emissions, they have been severely affected by hurricanes, floods and other extreme weather events, Guatemala's Environment Minister Mario Rojas said and recalled that approximately 60 percent of the regional population lives in poverty.

The people most vulnerable to natural disasters reside precisely in rural

areas, where ecological deterioration further aggravates the impacts of global climate change. In Central America, high levels of deforestation make extreme weather events more easily turn into disasters, which greatly affects the levels of poverty and malnutrition, said Piedad Martin, the regional director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Guatemala has lost almost 25 percent of its forests and over 25 percent of its watersheds have been polluted. While up to 80,000 hectares of native forests are lost in Honduras every year, only 3 percent of Salvadoran forests are still intact.

In one of its geopolitical reports, the U.S. government placed Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua on a list of 11 countries with less capacity to adapt to the climate crisis. That list also includes Haiti, a Caribbean nation where thousands of people try to migrate to the United States, fleeing the ravages caused by earthquakes, hurricanes, and violence.

Currently, SICA comprises Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. These countries will also demand urgent international financing mechanisms to combat the effects of climate change in their territories.



# Belize's delegation to COP26

The Government of Belize (GOB) sent a 30 person delegation to the recent COP26 conference in Glasgow. (COP26 was the 26<sup>th</sup> Climate Change Conference of Parties held in Glasgow from Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> October to 12<sup>th</sup> November this year.)

The Public Service Union (PSU) of Belize questioned why so many people were included in the delegation given that the watchwords of the government have included 'austerity', 'sacrifice' and 'management of financial resources'. They further questioned why it had not been possible for some of the delegation to attend remotely in order to save costs.

In response, the Prime Minister John Briceño pointed out that the conference directly involved several ministries including the Ministries of Sustainable Development, the Blue Economy, the Attorney General, Finance and Foreign Affairs. He also noted that funding for the delegation's visit to Glasgow would come from the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre which has its headquarters in Belize as well as from the conference itself.

The PSU, however, is clearly suspicious of the funding and said that it "expects FULL transparency from the GOB with the publication of the total cost incurred by the GOB, inclusive of airfare, hotel accommodations and cost per diem. This would offer ALL Belizeans a better picture of what taxpayer dollars are being allocated to."

The PSU also mentioned the decision to cut salaries by 10 per cent and reminded the GOB that the spending should go towards the betterment of the country. Moreover, the GOB's promises related to its own austerity, accountability and transparency should be kept.



# Covid in Central America – update

Although the coronavirus statistics for individual countries are likely to become outdated in the time between newsletter preparation and printing and then distribution, in the UK we hear very little about the rates of cases, deaths and vaccinations in countries of the south. So, we have included relatively recent statistics here along with equivalent data for the UK at the same time.

Country	Total cases(1)	Total deaths (1)	Confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million pop (2)
Panamá	473,718	7,338	1,674
Guatemala	606,743	15,520	854
Honduras	376,676	10,336	1,027
El Salvador	116,258	3,704	566
Costa Rica	563,290	7,176	1,394
Nicaragua	13,150	210	31
Belize	28,401	519	1,309
UK	9,406,005	142,338	2,086

**Sources:**

(1): <https://www.paho.org/en/topics/corona-virus-infections/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-pandemic> (as at 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021)

(2): <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/covid-19-death-rate-vs-population-density?tab=table> (as at 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021)

(3): <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations?country=GBR> as at 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

**Vaccination rates (3)**

Country	% fully vaccinated	% partly vaccinated
Belize	50	6
Costa Rica	57	17
El Salvador	61	6
Guatemala	19	11
Honduras	34	4
Nicaragua	8	10
Panama	54	14
UK (for comparison)	67	7



## CENDAH environmental awareness raising project

*In 2020 ENCA granted \$4,000 (USD) to the Centre for Environmental and Human Development (CENDAH) of the Guna Indigenous People of the San Blas Islands in Panama for their programme of environmental awareness development. In ENCA 81 we reported on the progress of the programme as CENDAH coordinator Geodisio Castillo had sent us an interim report that was translated for the newsletter by ENCA member Jill Powis. Now Geodisio has sent us a Final Report and this has been translated for us by another ENCA member, Stephanie Williamson. As the Final Report is too long for the newsletter, Stephanie has summarized it for us and that summary is provided here. We are grateful to Stephanie for her work on this.*

ENCA has helped support the Centre for Environmental and Human Development (CENDAH) in their work with indigenous Gunadule communities in Panama's Atlantic coast for several years. In 2020 ENCA provided funding obtained from the late ENCA member Phillip Wearne's generous legacy, for a 12 month project to raise awareness of climate change and biodiversity issues in the community of Mandi Ubgigandub. CENDAH's aim was to help community members understand the links between these environmental challenges and how they can better manage natural resources for healthy and sustainable livelihoods.

With the Covid pandemic, the project took on more immediate relevance as vulnerable and isolated communities were encouraged by their leadership councils to grow more food. However, many of the younger people have little idea of the nature-friendly farming methods used by their ancestors and a sudden increase in slash and burn activity would risk serious ecological damage to soils, water courses and community health.

CENDAH started by carrying out an assessment of the current state of the environment with Mandi Ubgigandub villagers and used the results to design learning and experience sharing workshops, with a focus on setting up agroforestry plots based on traditional 'nainu' fields managed individually or in collective. The team worked with small groups of 10 villagers at a time to comply with national restrictions on social distancing, organising regular dialogue sessions for community self-help in food production and 'learning by doing' activities. Mobile phone surveys were also used to reach out to more people in other villages.

13 young people took part in the first practical workshop, aimed at helping families to produce more of their own food during the Covid crisis, while using techniques that respect Mother Earth. These included combining trees, palms and shrubs, removing diseased banana and plantain and selecting new, healthy suckers to replace these. Participants also learnt how to grow root crops, mainly

dividing tubers for planting and trellis support. Discussions were held on how to strengthen community food security during the social distancing of villages required by the Panamanian authorities.

CENDAH also facilitated workshops by mobile phone on the climate change topic, using interactive dialogue methodology. Community participants identified ways in which their Gunayala region is particularly vulnerable, including to predicted rises in sea level, while the high degree of endemic species of reptiles, amphibians and birds on land and in the sea could become endangered. These dialogue and reflection sessions focussed on the importance of conserving the Guna people's biocultural identity and the economic, social and environmental value of their natural resources. The pandemic meant that planned experience exchanges between villages – as envisaged in the pre-pandemic programme proposal – were no longer feasible so this activity was limited to Mandi Ubgigandub villagers only.

Two one hectare agroforestry plots were then set up by 40 members of the village's 'young farmers' group *Olonagdiginya*, with remote guidance from the CENDAH team as quarantine regulations did not permit travel into the community area. The plots were planted with major intercrops of banana/plantain with yam, with smaller proportions of cassava, maize, sugarcane and planting of fruit trees including soursop and lemon, using carefully selected varieties and seed/saplings. To help support communities with poor harvests better cope with the food security and livelihood disruption caused by the pandemic, the group decided to share this season's harvested produce with affected households, rather than sell it. >>



*on the cultivation of the banana/plantain facilitated by an agronomist of the Ministry of Agriculture's Gunayala Agency*



Bundorgan women in dialogue in Aglidub

- and reviving traditional nature-respectful practices
- ✓ Food security, self-sufficiency and solidarity enhanced during the Covid pandemic challenges while conserving the environment
- ✓ Participation in General Congresses (an important part of the Gunadule people’s self-governance and identity), to give formal accounts of progress and achievement

Due to Covid restrictions on travel and inter-village communication, planned activities for two environmental education workshops, two video conferences and an inter-village experience exchange trip could not be carried out. Opportunities to reschedule these will be explored.

Overall, the project has achieved:

- ✓ Awareness of climate change and biodiversity issues raised among 80% of farmers and community members in Mandi Ubgigandub
- ✓ 85% of forest conserved in undamaged state, using the

ancestral slogan of ‘Don’t kill brother Tree’ as an entry point to help villagers learn the value of trees in capturing carbon dioxide and mitigating climate change

- ✓ 80% of family plot owners, including 70% young people, trained in agroforestry methods

CENDAH would like to thank ENCA for funding support for this project and to the Mandi Ubgigandub community, the Ministry of Agriculture’s Gunayala Agency, the Gunayala Regional office of Ministry of Environment, the General Congresses and especially the youth group Olonagdiginya for their active participation.

## Renewing your membership

Over the last year PayPal updated their account settings to meet new banking regulations. This meant that many individuals and organisations were required to provide additional identification and verification to keep their account active. While ENCA has updated our account, we have noticed that many of our members have not. Where a member’s PayPal account has not been updated we have not been able to receive your membership funds.

The small membership we charge helps to cover the cost of this newsletter, but more importantly all the small fees add up quickly enabling us to support community and environmental work such as that carried out by CENDH. We would be grateful if could check you PayPal account and ensure it is updated so that we are able to take your membership fee. Alternatively you may like to change to paying your donation by standing order.

### Option 1

Login to PayPal.com and ensure you have added all the required proof of identity. If your payments have stopped already you may need to set them up again via [enca.org.uk/join](http://enca.org.uk/join)

### Option 2

Pay your membership by standing order to the following account:

Name: ENCA, Number: 29849897 sort code: 05-02-00

Membership costs and more information is listed at [enca.org.uk/join](http://enca.org.uk/join)



# Saturday 4 December 2021

10am – 5pm

Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ

Despite the end of the Trump presidency, the US is continuing sanctions, blockades and illegal 'regime change' efforts against Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua. Yet these countries continue to resist the Empire, and right across Latin America there are remarkable democratic and social advances, with Bolivia, Argentina and Peru electing left presidents, Chile set to tear up the neo-liberal constitution, and the resistance growing against the far-right regimes in Colombia and Brazil. We can take inspiration from how people across the region are fighting back, through progressive mass movements to struggles for independence and sovereignty and resisting neo-liberalism and US domination.

Come to the **Latin America Conference 2021** to find out first-hand about the latest developments in the region and how we can offer solidarity.

Bringing together experts, academics, trade unionists, politicians, and activists from the UK, Europe and Latin America including:

- **Jeremy Corbyn MP** • **Kate Hudson, CND** • **John McDonnell MP** • **Claudia Turbet-Delof, Bolivia** • **Richard Burgon MP** • **Mariela Kohon, TUC** • **Julia Felmanas, Brazil** • **Jon Trickett MP** • **Dr Emily Morris** • **Jess Barnard, Young Labour** • **Bárbara Montalvo, Cuban Ambassador** • **Gabriel Rodriguez, Argentina** • **Guiselle Morales-Echaverry, Nicaraguan Ambassador** • **Rocio Maniero, Venezuelan Ambassador** • **Fidel Narvaez, Ecuador** • **Valia Rodriguez, Cuban doctor** • **Tony Burke, Unite** • **Roger McKenzie, Liberation** • **Ronan Burtenshaw, Editor, Tribune** • **Ben Chacko, Editor, Morning Star** • **Belgica Guaña, Ecuador** • Plus more great speakers to be announced.

## Tickets

[Bit.ly/LA21ticket](https://bit.ly/LA21ticket)

## Twitter

[@LatAmericaConf](https://twitter.com/LatAmericaConf)

## Facebook

[Bit.ly/3F69j9J](https://bit.ly/3F69j9J)

## Website

[bit.ly/3EWCI5S](https://bit.ly/3EWCI5S)

[enca.org.uk](https://enca.org.uk)

 [@ENCA\\_News](https://twitter.com/ENCA_News)

## Meeting Dates 2022

**Feb 27<sup>th</sup> | July 10<sup>th</sup> | October 16<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 may have to be held online or in a hybrid format*