

# EL SALVADOR

## COUNTRY PROFILE

# 5.2

El Salvador has achieved significant progress since the early 1990s in terms of poverty reduction, improving basic education, reducing child mortality and improving access to health care, water and sanitation. However, as a result of the current global economic crisis, El Salvador has seen a significant decrease in foreign direct investment and inflows of remittances.

### 5.2.1 SELECTED RTU



#### RTU Bajo Lempa

Bajo Lempa consists of the municipalities of Zacatecoluca (Department of La Paz) and Tecoluca (Department of San Vicente). It is an agriculture-based rural area with a growing textile industry (*maquila*). The overflow of the Lempa River and hundreds of rivers and streams, which drain

into it from the central volcanic chain to the Pacific coastal plain, causes recurrent flooding. Drought also has a significant impact and is the cause of the majority of agricultural losses. Earthquakes are characterised by their low recurrence and moderate impact.

## RTU Área Metropolitana de San Salvador (AMSS)

The communities of El Cañito, Cristo Redentor and Nueva Israel, located in a marginal urban area of the municipality of San Salvador, are densely populated but have good infrastructure services. However, because of inadequate development in these communities (a non-existent drainage

system and a high degree of contamination from garbage and sewage) and the lack of environmental and risk reduction planning, floods are recurrent. In addition to this risk, these communities have a high prevalence of crime against individuals and private property.

## RTU Los Izalcos and Juayúa

Los Izalcos and Juayúa are two micro-regions (in the Department of Sonsonate) made up of various municipalities. Los Izalcos is on a plain with small pockets of farmers practicing subsistence agriculture. Juayúa is in a mountainous area with a low population density and a thriving tourism sector. The recurring extreme environmental

events in this RTU are floods, droughts, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and landslides. In October 2005, a large phreatic explosion and ash rainfall in the *Parque Nacional los Volcanes* affected dozens of municipalities in both micro-regions, coinciding with Hurricane Stan.

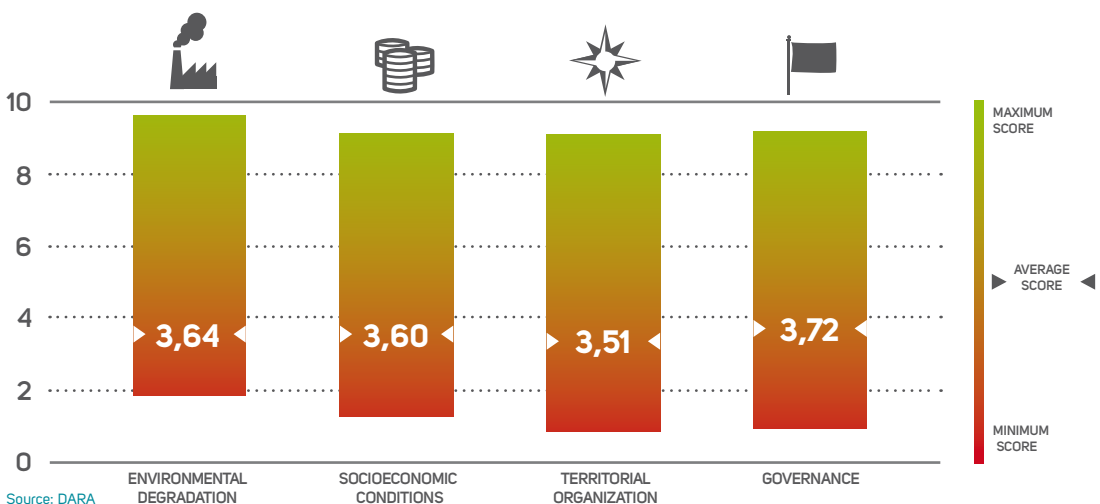
### 5.2.2 RISK DRIVERS

#### RISK DRIVER 1: Environmental Degradation

Informants in the three RTUs consider environmental degradation processes to be hindering effective risk reduction and highlight, in particular, the overexploitation of water resources (RTU AMSS) and deforestation. Government intervention to revert environmental degradation processes is ineffective in all three. In addition, severe climate variations

have been observed for several years, including changes in average and extreme temperatures, in the precipitation cycle (RTU AMSS) and the intensity of storms and hurricanes (RTU Bajo Lempa), representing a problem for the sustainable development of communities.

CHART B: QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS IN EL SALVADOR BY RISK DRIVER





The Izalco Volcano is a natural draw for tourists. Source: USAID/Angela Rucker

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### **RISK DRIVER 2: Socioeconomic Conditions**

Food insecurity, unemployment, poverty and limited access to health services and education have been identified in the three RTUs (AMSS, Bajo Lempa, Los Izalcos y Juayúa) as the socioeconomic conditions that most limit effective risk management. There

are too few economic incentives and too little adequate social protection to reduce poverty and food insecurity. Road infrastructure is inefficient and very few DRR initiatives are promoted by community associations and social organisations.

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### **RISK DRIVER 3: Territorial Organisation**

In the three RTUs, some elements of territorial organisation have been identified as serious impediments to DRR, including occupation of unsafe or fragile land, inadequately located and low

quality housing. Land use plans do not incorporate risk reduction measures effectively, and public and private investments are made in infringement of construction codes.

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### **RISK DRIVER 4: Governance**

The weak capacity of government institutions (RTU AMSS and RTU Los Izalcos y Juayúa), centralisation in decision-making (RTU Bajo Lempa), lack of coordination and consultation among levels of government, high levels of bureaucracy and lack of compliance with legislation (RTU Bajo Lempa and RTU Los Izalcos y

Juayúa) are the aspects of governance that most hinder effective risk management in the three RTUs. The lack of participatory mechanisms for budget allocation, limited social participation in development processes and lack of transparency in decision-making are other elements that do not favour risk reduction.

The results of the questionnaire carried out in El Salvador suggest that all four risk drivers contain specific elements that are detrimental to risk reduction to varying degrees in all three RTUs. Some of the most prominent elements are low incomes, lack of education, environmental degradation and inappropriate land use.

## THE OVERFLOW OF RIVERS THAT CROSS THE COUNTRY, FROM THE VOLCANIC CHAIN TO THE PACIFIC COASTAL PLAIN, CAUSE RECURRENT FLOODS AND SEVERE LOSSES

In the El Salvador workshop, the participants validated the results of the questionnaire and identified common opinions and recommendations for risk reduction:

- Increase participation of all stakeholders.
- Governments must follow through with the creation and implementation of measures to reduce vulnerability.
- The empowerment of the local population is vital to achieve objectives.
- Greater levels of awareness and participation are necessary, given that this motivates members of at-risk communities to enhance public safety and emergency preparedness.
- Risk reduction orientation and planning should be systematic.
- Coordination between Civil Protection and the Ministry of Environment needs to improve.
- Dissemination of research and knowledge is fundamental to understand risk and disasters, while general education is needed to improve prevention and preparedness practices.
- There must be an exchange and flow of information so that government institutions are better coordinated.

As a result of the previous recommendations, three specific actions are suggested to improve risk reduction:

- Create working methods and advocacy tools to raise awareness.
- In education, launch an intensive education process aimed at youth and children, and design a specific course on environmental education for use in schools.
- Develop early-warning systems and keep the population informed on a regular and permanent basis.