

Story of survival – JAIRO (Nicaragua)



Photo: Gonzalo Bell

At a glance

Problem caused by climate change:

Drought and increasingly frequent hurricanes, floods and landslides.

SCIAF partner: Juan XXIII.

Solution:

- A community emergency response team has been created to deal with future disasters.

Outcome:

Jairo is part of the emergency response team and now feels better prepared for future disasters.

Introduction

Jairo lives in a very remote community in Nicaragua. It has been cut off by hurricanes, floods and other disasters. This meant that during emergencies it was difficult for people to obtain essential supplies or to be evacuated if they needed medical attention.

How SCIAF has helped Jairo's community

- Training provided on health, housing, education, rights and new skills.
- Emergency preparedness training provided so that the community knows how to respond to the next disaster. Emergency rescue equipment has also been provided.
- Construction of water pumps so people don't have to walk long distances to access a safe drinking water.
- Rebuilding homes after Hurricane Mitch (1998).

Quotes

"The climate is getting hotter and there is more drought. When it doesn't rain here, there is drought and the seeds we plant get lost. We have to walk long distances to fetch water when there's a drought. Our cattle and horses die because of water shortages."

“During the hurricane [Mitch] we couldn’t leave the community. We were isolated and couldn’t buy food. Because of Juan XXIII we now know what to do if there is a hurricane.”

“The climate is not only changing but it is more contaminated now. I would also tell the leaders to take steps because the poles in the earth are melting. This is a test to see if everyone can work together to do this, on all of the continents.”

Transcript of interview with Jairo

Before Juan XXIII came, our community was not organised. We didn’t have a women’s organisation or a health organisation, for example. When Juan XXIII came, different groups of people started working with each other.

When we became organised, we started on housing, education, and health. The programme is almost finished; but now we know what to do, we can organise ourselves.

In the health programme, we learn to prevent diseases. We clean the community once a fortnight and all the areas around the houses – to help prevent dengue fever and malaria. We get rid of the ponds with dirty water. We also change the plant water.

In the education programme, we learned how to read. Adults also have to be taught to read. We also got support with education materials. People saw that Juan XXIII were serious about promoting learning when they saw the materials (e.g. pens and jotters).

In the environment project – we have problems because the climate here is too hot. There has been too much logging. We need to tell people that we need to take action against climate change. The climate is getting hotter and there is more drought. When it doesn’t rain here, there is drought and the seeds we plant get lost. When there is drought, there is no water; we lose our crops. But sometimes it is the other way around: we have hurricanes and our crops are lost, meaning we have very little for the summer season.

The kinds of things we plant are maize, corn, beans, wheat, fruit like papaya, melon and watermelon.

We have to walk long distances to fetch water when there’s a drought. Our cattle and horses die because of water shortages.

[Hurricane Mitch and disaster preparedness]

Before Hurricane Mitch, it hadn't rained for a long time. We had to travel to the city to buy corn and beans. During the hurricane we couldn't leave the community. We were isolated and couldn't buy food. Because of Juan XXIII we now know what to do if there is a hurricane. We have practised twice and we have an emergency team.

The emergency team takes people to a safe place. They contact the "auxiliary" committee by radio. The safe place is a *casa communal* (communal house) built by Juan XXIII. During the two training days, we crossed the river using ropes – we learned how to carry someone using a stretcher tied to ropes. We use a bell to warn people about the hurricane.

What would you say about climate change to people living in Europe?

I would tell people to take steps; the climate is not only changing but it is more contaminated now. I would also tell the leaders to take steps because the poles of the earth are melting. This is a test to see if everyone can work together to do this, on all of the continents.

Do you have a message for the people of Scotland?

We thank you for your support. Without it, this wouldn't be possible.