

Story of survival – JULIAN and DORA (El Salvador)



Photo: Gonzalo Bell

At a glance

Problem caused by climate change:
Flooding caused by Hurricane Stan.

SCIAF partner: FUNDAHMER.

Solution:

- Training provided on what to do during an emergency.

Outcome:

The community now knows what to do during an emergency – including how to identify risk zones and how to set up rescue teams when disaster strikes.

Introduction

In 2005 Hurricane Stan hit Central America. In Julian and Dora's community, many homes were damaged or destroyed. People also lost their crops because of the high winds and flooding. SCIAF's partners in El Salvador helped people immediately after Hurricane Stan by supplying emergency aid, including food, blankets and soap.

How SCIAF has helped Julian and Dora's community

- Training provided on how to prepare for future emergencies including learning to carry out risk assessments and how to rescue people from collapsed houses.
- Provision of income-generation training (e.g. shampoo production and beekeeping) to help provide a supplementary income for families.
- Training provided on caring for animals.

Quotes

"We suffered because of Hurricane Stan... houses fell down; many were destroyed. We also lost our harvest – corns and beans – because there was so much water and wind."

"We have learned through workshops how to identify risk zones and what to do at the moment of a disaster. It is important to stay calm. Sometimes because of the fear you run to a dangerous place. You have to be calm even if you are really scared."

“Don’t destroy the environment. It is nature that gives us life. The earth is our second mother – it gives us life and health.”

Transcript of interview with Julian and Dora

In our community we have had lots of support and training from FUNDAHMER (SCIAF’s partner) – we’ve had workshops on shampoo production, beekeeping, taking care of chickens, and emergency preparedness training. This is all important for our family and community.

FUNDAHMER are giving us training for a better future – we grow onions and tomatoes without any chemicals. People’s health is better without chemicals. Chemicals have caused cancer and pains in our bones and also diarrhoea. We also now don’t have to spend money on chemicals as we know how to farm organically.

Without FUNDAHMER our lives would be bad. Thanks to them we have bathrooms and water containers. Before, we had to go to the river to wash clothes but we couldn’t do this when it rained because the water was so dirty. We’d have to wait a week. We also got help to build a community house – where we have the workshops and training.

We grow food for the family and we save the surplus so we have enough for the rest of the year. We also sell leftover corn for essentials like soap and oil.

We suffered because of Hurricane Stan and also because of the earthquake. People’s houses fell down; many were completely destroyed. We also lost our harvest because there was so much water and wind. Some in the community have recovered; others still not. FUNDAHMER helped us after the emergency by giving us necessities such as food, towels, blankets and soap.

Tell us about the disaster training you’ve received

We have learned through workshops how to identify risk zones and what to do at the moment of a disaster. It is important to stay calm. Sometimes because of the fear you run to a dangerous place. You have to be calm even if you are really scared. During an earthquake, the risk zones are the mountains because of falling rocks. A safe zone is a flat zone, like down at the school.

We know how to organise ourselves and how to look out for others. We make sure that people are rescued from collapsed houses. Everyone helps each other. We ring the bell and everyone gathers in the safe area. It is the same preparation for a flood. If someone is ill or injured then we use hammocks as stretchers.

Have you noticed an increase in extreme weather?

Yes, it comes more often because of deforestation or maybe because it is so hot.

There are droughts, crops don't grow. At other times crops are ruined. Sometimes we don't have food for children and basic food becomes very expensive. We don't have enough money to buy medicine. If we go to the city we can earn \$6 a day but for a family that is not enough. We work the land to sustain the whole family. The cost of basic food is going up. Rice, beans and oil are more expensive. Bus fares are also very expensive because of the rising diesel costs. This means that children can't go to town or university.

What is your relationship with your environment?

Here, we care for the environment. We have learned not to burn the land and we make organic fertiliser. If we cut down a tree then we plant another one.

This week the community united to clean up the rubbish around the area. The young people are painting a mural on the community house, explaining that it's important to put rubbish in the right place. If they leave bottles lying about, they collect water and mosquitoes breed in the dirty water and spread malaria.

Do you have a message for those living in Europe?

No more machines that ruin the earth. The cars' smoke is ruining the earth. The factories are ruining the planet.

No more war! We have lived through a war for 12 yrs. We were displaced; we don't want to suffer another war. (Note: the people in this community were displaced by the war in El Salvador – a Jesuit priest bought the land on behalf of the community.)

Do you have a message for the people of Scotland?

Don't destroy the environment. It is nature that gives us life. The earth is our second mother – it gives us life and health. Use fewer chemicals by trying things like organic fertiliser. Thank you for caring about the neediest in the world.