

El Salvador Fact Profile

- Child labor is a common practice to support family: especially selling in open markets, dumpsite scavenging, and gathering mussels in mangroves (while smoking cigars to repel mosquitoes).
- Government provides few social services and too few schools and clinics.
- Only 30% of rural schools go through the fifth grade. (USAID)
- Only 65% of rural poor start school. (USAID, 2000)
- 15% of students reach secondary schools (6% rural).
- Average education levels are to grades 1.9 rural and 3.3 urban. (USAID, 2000)
- Classes are overcrowded with 35 students who attend half-day sessions.
- Teachers work with different students for morning and afternoon sessions.
- The Salvadoran population will double by 2020.
- Rural women by tradition are confined to homes for cooking, childcare, and walking for wood and water.
- Until the last decade, women were not expected to attend school or speak in public.
- Abuse of women is common. Most women are unaware of their rights, and not protected by law enforcement.
- One out of three people suffer illnesses caused by drinking polluted water.
- 90% of rivers are polluted.
- The second most common illnesses are from lung diseases caused from inhaling smoke made by in-house wood cooking fires.
- Consumption of wood exceeds the sustainable supply.
- 98% of forests were lost to deforestation between cash crops and army bombing. (USAID)
- In 2006, approximately \$3.3 billion came from remittances sent by relatives in the USA, which is nearly 20% of the total economy (GDP). Without these funds, the economy would collapse. Central Reserve Bank
- Minimum wage is \$5.40/day, agriculture \$2.50/day, but legal rate is seldom paid.
- More than 35.2% of population live below the poverty line in 2005 (CIA Factbook, 2007).
- Without remittances, 37% of population would live in extreme poverty.
- Most rural houses are built with cornstalks, mud, and scrap metal, but are increasingly covered with concrete or replaced by cinderblock when remittance money comes from relatives in the USA.
- Subsistence farmers who rent land are increasingly unable to raise their food because landowners find cattle more profitable.
- Poverty and social exclusion, recognized causes of El Salvador's 1980-1992 armed conflict (75,000 dead, 40,000 disabled) remain acute problems that have not been addressed by government policies.

- Disabled veterans get a pension ranging from \$37 to \$95 a month while the legal minimum monthly wage is \$175. Daniel Martínez president, Assoc. of Armed Forces War Wounded of El Salvador (ALFAES)
- With a population of 7 million, 2.5 million Salvadorans now live outside the country (2.3 in USA).
- Each day 700 Salvadorans leave the country in search of work. CRECEN-Central Am. Resource Center
- A basic food basket cost \$24.50 more than the minimum monthly wage in 1992 and \$63.50 more than the minimum wage in November 2006. Does not include costs of transportation, education and clothing Consumer Defense Center (CDC)
- The CDC study also pointed out that basic services absorbed 14 percent of peoples wages in 1992 compared to 37 percent last year.
- Since 2001, when the dollar was adopted to tame inflation, it has increased by 19.9% between 2002 and 2006 – 9% above the 1997-2001 average according to the CDC.
- Economist Alex Segovia said the origins of the current conditions in El Salvador lie in the divorce between the political agenda and the economic-social agenda of the Peace Accord because the monetary financial and trade-related measures adopted by the administrations that have governed since 1992 have failed to take into account the causes of the armed conflict – exclusion, poverty, and inequality.
- When ARENA came to power in 1989 President Cristiani privatized the banking sector and undertook structural adjustment measures and economic reforms. Since then the telephone and power companies as well as the pension system have also been privatized and the economy has been dollarized.
- While big importers, bankers, shopping mall owners, telecommunication, and credit card companies have gotten special government considerations and are profitable, they have ignored the goals of progress and equality in favor of short-term profits. This has caused a loss of jobs, increases in inequality, and the impoverishment of the middle class. Economist Héctor Vidal a former adviser to the National Association of Private Enterprise (ANEP)
- Official statistics indicate that El Salvador posted an average GDP growth rate of just two percent between 1995 and 2004 one of the lowest in Salvadoran history and one of the lowest in Latin America that year.
- The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimates that the Salvadoran economy grew 3.5 percent in 2006 but analysts say the increase did not necessarily result in an improvement in living standards for Salvadorans.
- The United Nations Development Programs Human Development Report for El Salvador 2003 said the gap between rich and poor has widened. In 1992 the richest 20 percent of households received 54.5 percent of the national income, a proportion that had risen to 58.3 percent 10 years later. Meanwhile the poorest 20 percent of households got by on 3.2 percent of the national income in 1992 and just 2.4 percent 10 years later.
- El Salvador is experiencing a financial bubble, new shopping centers, cell-phones by the thousands, and a growing number of cars, but they are the result of remittances sent by workers from the USA rather than from the growth of the Salvadoran economy. Meanwhile the breakdown of the social fabric increases. Ratification of the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention now protects the right of workers to unionize.