

**START**  
NETWORK

REGIONAL BRIEF

# LAC CLIMATE WEEK



## BACKGROUND

Latin America and the Caribbean Climate Week (LACCW) will take place from 23-27 October 2023 in Panama City, hosted by the government of Panama. The LACCW 2023 is a platform for policymakers, practitioners, businesses, and civil society to exchange climate solutions, barriers to overcome, and opportunities realised in different regions. It is the third of the Regional Climate Weeks for 2023.

The Regional Climate Weeks consider four major systems-based tracks with an aim to provide region-focused contributions to inform the global stock take. The themes are:

- 1 ENERGY SYSTEMS AND INDUSTRY;**
- 2 CITIES, URBAN AND RURAL SETTLEMENTS, INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT;**
- 3 LAND, OCEAN, FOOD, AND WATER;**
- 4 SOCIETIES, HEALTH, LIVELIHOODS, AND ECONOMIES.**

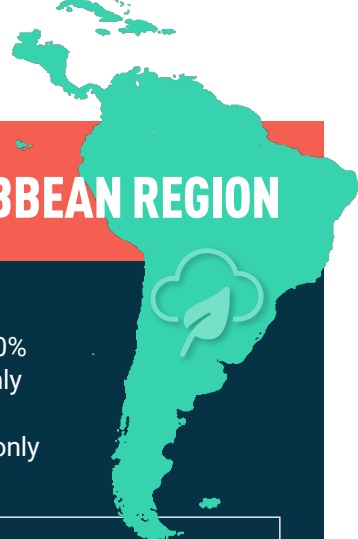
Due to the nature of Start Network's work and expertise, the focus of our contributions is on the fourth topic.

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# KEY FACTS & FIGURES THE LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN REGION



Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is a diverse region with a variety of climatic conditions ranging from tropical, to temperate, and arid. The region is also home to 50% of the world's biodiversity and one-third of the global freshwater resource. LAC is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, despite having made a historically small contribution to global greenhouse emissions. In 2019, global emissions represented only 6.75% of global emissions (OECD, 2023).



THE IMPACTS OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS ON THE REGION VARY AND CONTINUE TO EVOLVE AND INTENSIFY OVER TIME. AT PRESENT, THE MOST PROFOUND CLIMATE IMPACTS ACROSS THE REGION INCLUDE INCREASING TEMPERATURES, CHANGES IN RAINFALL PATTERNS, AND SEA LEVEL RISE AND THE INTENSIFICATION OF THE LA NIÑA OR EL NIÑO PHENOMENA (UNDRR, 2021). SUCH CHANGES ARE CONSEQUENTLY IMPACTING CLEAN WATER AVAILABILITY; INCREASING FLOODS AND DROUGHTS, LANDSLIDES, FOREST FIRES, REDUCING FOOD PRODUCTION, AND INCREASING INSTANCES OF DISEASE (PÉREZ & TOMASELLI, 2021).

## THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND HUMANITARIAN NEED

Climate change exacerbates needs where vulnerabilities are highest and humanitarians are already stretched. The impacts of climate change are expected to lead to increased humanitarian costs exceeding US\$ 20bn per year (ALNAP, 2023).

Between 1997 and 2017, one out of every four disasters in the world were in the LAC region. Nine out of ten people affected by these disasters were impacted by climatic events. More recently, between 2020 - 2022, the UNDRR reported a total of 175 disasters across the region. Of these, 88% were reported to have meteorological, climatological, and hydrological origins. These hazards accounted for 40% of recorded disaster-related deaths and 71% of the economic losses (OCHA, 2022).



## MIGRATION

Climate migration is increasing in LAC. By 2050, the World Bank (2021) predicts that the number of climate migrants could reach:

**216.1 MILLION**  
WORLDWIDE

Within the LAC region, recurring drought combined with excessive rainfall, severe floods, food insecurity, insufficient incomes and falling local food production alongside lack of employment and forced migration. Within these populations, marginalised groups including women, girls, boys, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected. (ILO, 2020) Latin America alone could see 17.1 million internal climate migrants. Such figures should impart a sense of urgency for early action among policy and decision makers (World Bank, 2021).

While some Global South countries are developing climate-induced relocation policies, these are not widespread and such policies often exclude marginalised groups such as Indigenous Peoples (Pérez & Tomaselli, 2021)



## ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS

In the region, more than 27% of the population live in coastal areas, with approximately 6-8% of the population living in areas considered to be at risk or very high risk of coastal hazards (WMO, 2023). Many areas are also vulnerable to wildfires, which present a risk to human life

and ecosystems. For example, in Jamaica, Paraguay, Mexico, and El Salvador over 70% of the forest area is exposed to wildfire risks (OECD, 2023). In 2020 alone, the region endured 30 named storms, along with record-breaking hurricanes Eta and Iota. These storms have left behind greater challenges in meeting the already complex needs driven by recurring climate shocks. Such challenges include chronic violence

and gender-based violence, displacement across and within borders, high poverty, and inequalities in access to basic services and opportunities (UNDRR, 2023). Existing levels of high inequalities and poverty make LAC one of the most vulnerable regions in the world. Consequently, climate change is exacerbating existing economic, ethnic and social inequalities and further compounding

existing challenges including the reliance on natural resources and food security (OECD, 2023). For those within the agricultural sector, vulnerability is further heightened due to a lack of social protection and social safety nets for self-employed persons. The Inter-American Development Bank (2023) estimate that climate change could push an additional 5.8 million people into poverty by 2030.

START NETWORK'S FINANCING MECHANISM, **START FUND**, PROVIDES RAPID RESPONSE FUNDING TO UNDER-THE-RADAR, SMALL TO MEDIUM-SCALE CRISES, FILLING A CRITICAL GAP IN THE HUMANITARIAN AID SYSTEM.

## START FUND ACTIVATION: COLD SPIKES IN GUATEMALA

In February 2022, a spike in cold weather was recorded in Guatemala and low temperatures were expected to persist until the end of March. The cold spike affected agriculture and crop growth leading to increased food insecurity among the most vulnerable. Respiratory diseases amongst children were exacerbated by the temperatures and healthy nutrition for women and children was at particularly high risk.

CADENA (a Start Network INGO member), in consortium with ASECSA (a Start Network local member) and ADAM (a local partner), were selected to respond to this crisis, receiving £140,000 from the Start Fund. Agencies provided food baskets, blankets, clothes, bed sheets, agriculture kits (seeds and tools) and nutritious food kits for children, women and the elderly. Disaster Risk Reduction workshops were conducted with communities to support increased resilience and early action ahead of crises.

Approximately 3,700 families (14,800 individuals) were affected and needed basic items and services in order to recover from food shortage, disease, and malnutrition. NGOs in the region worked with local communities to assess needs and raise an alert to the Start Fund for emergency support. This crisis was recognised by the government as an emergency. However, due to a lack of institutional capacity to respond and reach those most vulnerable, the small-medium crisis remained under the radar.



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**AS A CONSORTIUM, THESE THREE NGOS REACHED 13,7474 INDIVIDUALS. KEY INTERVENTIONS INCLUDED:**

- DELIVERING 2,299 FOOD PACKAGES
- DISTRIBUTING 13,534 COLD WEATHER PACKAGES
- SUPPLYING 1,847 NUTRITIONAL KITS FOR CHILDREN, PREGNANT AND LACTATING WOMEN

By working together, the organisations were able to collaborate and apply each of their unique strengths to reach communities. This included utilising high levels of community trust, holding a deep understanding of local languages and cultures, and facilitating decision making through local leaders. Each organisation reported that working together through the Start Fund, they were able to learn from one another and they would carry forward these learnings to their future work.

IN FEBRUARY 2022, A SPIKE IN COLD WEATHER WAS RECORDED IN GUATEMALA



LOW TEMPERATURES WERE EXPECTED TO PERSIST UNTIL THE END OF MARCH



KEY INTERVENTIONS INCLUDED:

**2,299**  
FOOD PACKAGES

**13,534**  
COLD WEATHER PACKAGES



**1,847**  
NUTRITIONAL KITS FOR CHILDREN, PREGNANT & LACTATING WOMEN



THE COLD SPIKE AFFECTED AGRICULTURE AND CROP GROWTH LEADING TO INCREASED FOOD INSECURITY AMONG THE MOST VULNERABLE



RESPIRATORY DISEASES AMONGST CHILDREN WERE EXACERBATED BY THE TEMPERATURES



HEALTHY NUTRITION FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN WAS AT PARTICULARLY HIGH RISK



# SPOTLIGHT: CENTRAL AMERICAN DRY CORRIDOR

Geographical characteristics vary greatly across LAC with certain areas facing the brunt of changing climates. For example, the effects of climate change are already felt by populations living along the Central American Dry Corridor which spans Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. This dry corridor presents many issues for local populations including providing a route for drug trafficking between South America and the United States.

The dry corridor is characterised by long periods of drought and alternating periods of heavy rainfall affecting the livelihoods and food security of over 10 million residents (UNEP, 2023). The increasing intensity of droughts has led to a reduction in food production, impacting the livelihoods of many populations reliant on agriculture. This has had corresponding impacts on human health, especially on child malnutrition (WFP, 2023).

Along this corridor, local economies continue to suffer with dwindling agribusiness leading to the forced migration. Rural communities find themselves facing both food and economic insecurity. Due to the climate impacts on this dry corridor, families and communities are uprooting their homes in search of greater livelihood and job opportunities (ILO, 2020).



## KEY MESSAGES

BEYOND THE HEADLINES OF EXTREME WEATHER AND SEVERE DISASTERS, START NETWORK HAS BEEN ADDRESSING THE HUMANITARIAN IMPACTS OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS IN A NUMBER OF WAYS.

**01 Performing a lifesaving and gap-filling role** by responding to under-the-radar, small to medium sized crises through the Start Fund.



**02 Protecting people at risk of climatic crises through innovative financing** with Start Ready, which prepositions funding for predictable climate hazards. Start Ready pools risks across countries to stretch funding further and respond quickly to locally identified climate risks.



**03 Driving systemic change that prioritises locally led action**, and co-creating shifts in the way humanitarian action is approached, resourced, and delivered. By shifting power and decision-making through the work of the locally led humanitarian hubs working in partnership with us we advocate for a humanitarian system that is more locally led and anticipatory.



# POLICY ASKS



TOGETHER WITH OUR NETWORK OF MORE THAN 80 LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL GLOBAL ORGANISATIONS WORKING ACROSS FIVE CONTINENTS, WE ARE ADVOCATING FOR:

## 01 INCREASED FINANCING TO ADDRESS THE LOSSES AND DAMAGES CAUSED BY THE CLIMATE CRISIS.

Loss and damage is typically understood as the adverse impacts of climate change which have occurred and will occur despite mitigation and adaptation efforts. It is key that continued progress is made towards the targets on mitigation and adaptation, but it is also necessary to take steps to avert, minimise, and address current and future loss and damage. **Previous analysis** has estimated that the Global North is responsible for 92% of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Loss and Damage Financing Mechanism must be aligned with the calls from countries experiencing the biggest effects of climate change and cover both economic and non-economic loss and damage, including the impact on lives, societies, and environments. This should not be duplicative financing but rather in addition to existing financing from other sectors (e.g., humanitarian, development, and climate). Furthermore, the Loss and Damage Financing Mechanism should ensure that funding reaches people and communities affected and at risk of climate impacts.

## 02 A MORE LOCALLY LED HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO CLIMATE RISKS.

**The Grand Bargain** is an agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian aid organisations, and calls for 25 per cent of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders.

Through our financing mechanisms, we are able to shift resources to national and local organisations to anticipate and respond to crises. Local communities and people who are disproportionately affected by climate change must have access to risk information, early warning systems, and pre-arranged financing to respond to crises in a timely and efficient way to protect themselves.

Local knowledge, expertise, and leadership must be recognised to strengthen responses to climate risks. More locally informed and inclusive approaches to humanitarian response involves supporting community-based innovation, recognising local and Indigenous knowledge, and including the needs of all people in their diversity (e.g., traditionally marginalised populations like women, youth, elderly, and persons with disabilities).

## 03 A SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN THE HUMANITARIAN FINANCING SYSTEM, BASED ON INNOVATIVE, FLEXIBLE, AND PROACTIVE WAYS TO RESPOND TO CLIMATE NEEDS AND REDUCE RISK.

For some hazards it is possible to use science and risk modelling to determine the predictability and patterns of occurrence which can be utilised to act in anticipation or earlier in the evolution of the crisis.

The current humanitarian financing system is slow, reactive, and fragmented.

By shifting mindsets, resources, and financing to a proactive approach supported by financing that is released rapidly (and where possible in advance of crises) and responses that are led by actors within the crisis-context, it is possible to protect more people and reduce humanitarian impacts.

Anticipatory and early action must be complemented and connected to wider disaster risk management efforts to further reduce risks and continue to build resilience.