

Juan Martinez Waukee High
School Waukee, IA El Salvador,
Water, and Sanitation

El Agua Es
Vida *Water is*
Life

El agua, or water, is an important and essential part of our lives. Without water, our survival is impossible. From the flowers that blossom to the elephants that quench their thirst in the waters of the savanna, without the water provided to them by mother nature, life would be unimaginable for all living creatures. We often take the gift of water for granted and don't realize the blessings we have because of water. Fresh food, days at the pool, a sip of water on a warm day, showers and baths are all possible because of the precious gift of water. However, there are many places and people that are less fortunate when it comes to having access to clean water. One of those places is El Salvador. With water closely reaching an all-time zero in El Salvador, it is important to note the hardships many people experience and to recognize ways in which the world can bring relief and happiness to this country by helping solve water pollution and scarcity issues.

El Salvador is a very beautiful country that is located in Central America. The country is filled with mountains and hills. Along with these mountains are many volcanoes that run along the west-east line and cross the center of the country (Browning). Due to the higher mountain ranges, temperate grasslands and the remnants of deciduous oak and pine forests are more prominent than the central plains of El Salvador that mostly consist of valleys, small deciduous trees, bushes, and subtropical grasslands (Browning). The animal life in El Salvador is not as rich as other countries, particularly due to the fact that most of the country is cultivated (Browning). However, there are still many animals present such as rodents, reptiles, a vast variety of birdlife, fish, and animals like turtles and alligators, and many different species of insects (Browning). The rain season runs from May to October and the dry season runs from November to April (Browning). The tropical climate brings temperatures ranging from the high 50s to low 70s, making its climate a comfortable place to call home for the 6.49 million citizens ("El"). Of these 6.49 million citizens, 27.98% of the population is rural and 72.02% is urban ("El"). With a large number of people in the country, El Salvador relies on a presidential democratic republic. The families of El Salvador are primarily Spanish settlers and use Spanish as their official language of the country. A large part of the country follows some sort of religion and about one-half of Salvadorans are Roman Catholic while the rest of the population follows another religion such as Protestant (Browning). "More than three-fourths of the Salvadoran population lives in the intermontane basins of the central highlands" (Browning). This allows families to cultivate the

land in order to provide food for their families. Crops and items that are cultivated include coffee, corn, beans, and squash. Since the 19th century when the settlers first began to arrive in El Salvador, coffee has played a big role in the country's economy because of the ideal environment of the slopes that allows coffee to be cultivated (Hahn). The families of El Salvador experience many struggles due to the small housing unit that most families live in. Villages may contain housing units that are only small enough to fit a couple and their kids, but many families live with other relatives such as their uncles, cousins, grandparents, etc. Education is also important for all kids, but for El Salvador, it is difficult to provide education to most kids. Basic education is compulsory until age thirteen, but half the children ages six to sixteen, in the poorest families, do not attend school. "Nine of ten children of the richest families attend school, and a quarter goes on to study at a university. Poor families often cannot afford to pay school fees or pay for shoes and school supplies" (Hahn). Despite the problems many families face, they always show respect and proper etiquette to elderly, visitors, etc. and demonstrate that adversity can be defeated through hard work and dedication.

El Salvador means the Savior in English and it is time that we become the savior to help fix the water crisis in El Salvador. Many people rely on the wells scattered throughout the country to provide water for their families. Since they do not have access to running water, they must go to a well as early as two am to collect water (Hahn). However, water wells are not always able to provide water for families, and sometimes this leads to violence in order to gather water. Central America is usually well equipped with water resources, but due to the "small land area relative to its population size, [it] puts its thinning annual water supply per capita dangerously close to falling short of demand" (Hahn). Some families have even tried making their own makeshift plumbing systems to distribute water and it shows the work families put in to help keep them hydrated and healthy. Without proper water regulation, pollution and scarcity have begun to manifest the water and in turn, manifesting the citizens of El Salvador; this has affected a quarter of the population. According to reports from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, "more than 90 percent of surface water sources in the country are contaminated" (qtd. In Hahn). The water crisis is affecting everybody, but it is strongly affecting the suburbs of El Salvador. According to the Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUSADES), "Nearly a quarter of the population in rural areas has no access to running water either in their homes or at public taps" (qtd. In Hahn). This poses a problem for many rural families. As mentioned before, the water crisis is hurting the city too. El Salvador's capital and major city, San Salvador, is the city that has been affected the most in the past few months. San Salvador has tried to help the people of the city by using a water aquifer to help provide water to families and "damages to pipes earlier this year cut service to more than one million people for days" (Hahn). The result of the damage led families to fill jugs of water from emergency water trucks, some of which were from private companies that charged a fee, making matters even

worse for families just to obtain water to survive.

Climate change and natural disasters have also been hurting the country's chances at helping to fix the water crisis. Extreme drought seasons due to the harsh conditions of El Niño in 2016 have proven to be detrimental to many small farmers who have already been experiencing a shortage of food that could affect the country even more and lead to "displacement and migration," (Hahn). The drought seasons and a lack of water that is already available will make it extremely difficult to grow food. One would think that rainfall could fix the drought problems, but thanks to climate change, it actually makes the situation worse. Minister Pohl stated, "Rains come too fast and too hard to soak into the hard-packed ground, so not only does the precipitation fail to recharge severely depleted groundwater reserves during the rainy season, but it also provokes deadly floods that further displace residents" (Hahn). Water contamination and scarcity along with climate change is severely affecting the residents of El Salvador and their daily lives. Families risk their lives just to obtain water and without water, the families are not able to stay hydrated and they are not able to maintain their farms to provide food for their families. Action must be taken.

With efforts taken by countries around the world, the El Salvador water crisis can be averted. If the United Nations of Europe could help provide a sufficient amount of clean water in quantities based on family size or needs to El Salvador, residents can feel better knowing they have a supply of water. The United Nations could provide wells or an aquifer to every major city and in between villages, the walk to collecting water would be a lot easier. The United States can also help by providing food to the farmers and clean supply of water whether that be a well, an aquifer, or natural clean water that is not contaminated. Iowa could team up with villages and farmers in El Salvador and can help provide agricultural supplies to the farmers so that the farmers can help their country and families. Known for being the agricultural state, Iowa can very much help with proper education and supplies for farmers back in El Salvador. Even if it's just a missionary trip or a study abroad opportunity for college students interested in the agricultural field, this can help the people of El Salvador feel more connected knowing they are getting the help they need.

Now, some may argue that efforts taken by the United States to aid foreign countries in need may not help as much or may even backfire to hurt the United States. However, this is not the case whatsoever. El Salvador and the United States are trade partners, and both rely on each other for various supplies. As of 2018, El Salvador has exported 41.9% of varying supplies to the United States (SLV). With these numbers fairly high, it shows that we rely on El Salvador more than one would think. With an already struggling economy and low resources, El Salvador continues to produce as much as they can to help other countries. It is time that the United States helps El Salvador more than they help us. El Salvador receives imports from the United States at

an only 30.1% out of all their imports since 2018 (SLV). With that in mind, the ratio of imports to exports is not 1:1 yet and it is because the United States does not provide them with as much supplies as they really need. The United States can increase the amount of imports they produce to help aid El Salvador and could also provide El Salvador with different supplies than they are usually importing. This also all begins with us, the people of the United States.

Put yourself in the shoes of the people of El Salvador. What do you see? You may see that so many people ranging from newborn babies to the elderly are struggling to make ends meet. This is due to the poor living, water, and food conditions. If every person in the United States were to donate \$2 dollars to organizations in El Salvador that help the people, (such as Habitat for Humanity) every family would be able to have a roof over their heads. Now, if every American were to donate \$5-\$10 to an organization that helps with the biggest issue in El Salvador, water, (such as EcoViva) then families would have access to clean and healthy water to last them many years. EcoViva could take the money from the donations to build decently big wells that cycle clean and sanitized water in every village and can build proper plumbing in homes to decrease pollution in nearby rivers. With the addition of these wells and plumbing, rivers will be able to be revived to their healthy state with no pollution thus sparking nature to emerge again to restore the beautiful country of El Salvador. All it takes is a simple dollar or two and with that amount, over 6 million lives will be restored and the life of El Salvador will blossom into a wonderful, healthy, and safe life. However, it all starts with us; will you be the change?

The people of El Salvador need help and we need to be the change to their lives for the better. Fighting the water crisis together will benefit the people of El Salvador gradually. El agua es vida, water is life, and El Salvador needs life more than ever!

Works

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