

IFAD Strengthens Partnerships with Central America



By Ronald JoshuaROME | SAN SALVADOR (IDN) – Family farming accounts for about 50% of Agricultural Gross Domestic Product in Central America. It employs a huge percentage of agricultural working force, ranging from 36% in Costa Rica) to 76% in Honduras. According to the Rome-based International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)), the UN agency dedicated to rural development, about 2.3 million families in the region work in family farming. It is estimated that 6 in 10 family farmers face food insecurity and 65% live in poverty. Family farms' heads are, in 85% of the cases, male. Their average age is 49. Family farms' average extension is 1.13 ha. With this in view, IFAD has joined hands with PRISMA-OXFAM-RIMISP Consortium to launch in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, a Regional Rural Dialogue Programme (PDRR), a network of family farmers' organizations, focused on Central America and the Dominican Republic. The programme, launched on May 18, seeks to promote pro-family farming policies in support of inclusive, democratic governance and poverty reduction. This project, funded by IFAD and the PRISMA-OXFAM-RIMISP Consortium, expected to benefit about 600,000 farming families. Despite its economic and social importance, the agricultural sector faces significant challenges arising after decades of socio-economic upheaval and more recently, climatic changes, maintains IFAD. These changes have had a negative impact on development and quality of life among the rural population, most of whom suffer from poverty and inequality, adds IFAD in a press release. This is especially true for youth, women and indigenous peoples. "Beyond food production, family farming contributes to protecting the environment, biodiversity and cultural identity and promotes territorial development. Governments in the region should devise public policies to address the challenges family farmers face," said PDRR's representative Abel Lara. "These policies should include key issues such as: investment in rural infrastructure that is resilient to climate change, technology, extension services and rural finance programmes; access to productive resources (land, seeds, water resources); promotion of local and interregional markets; strengthening rural organizations and involvement of women and youth," said Ileana Gomez, representative of the PRISMA-OXFAM-RIMISP Consortium. The project will focus on strengthening PDRR's leadership and advocacy skills, as well as its strategic vision, so that it can play a leading role in the construction and implementation of a regional pro-family farming policy agenda. The aim is to influence not only national and regional decision-makers, but also multilateral donors and cooperation agencies to ensure that rural development projects and programmes are effective. The PDRR, which is composed of 21 family farmer and indigenous

organizations in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, will act as interlocutor of the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC), strengthening rural population's participation in decision making, which it is vital to achieve better effectiveness of rural development public policies."Policy dialogue platforms have always been an important part of IFAD's work. They are an element of both inspiration and advocacy. Similar experiences to the one launched today for Central America have managed to devise and implement successful pro-family farming policies in the Southern Cone and other countries of Latin America," said Glayson Ferrari, IFAD's Country Programme Manager for El Salvador. The total amount of the project is US\$1.75 million. IFAD contributes with \$1.5 million and the PRISMA-OXFAM-RIMISP Consortium contributes with \$250,000. The project has an implementation period of three years. The launch event was attended by officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) of El Salvador and the Executive Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council (SE-CAC), as well as representatives of farmers' unions, rural youth, women, indigenous peoples and cooperation organizations. [IDN-InDepthNews – 19 May 2016] IDN is flagship agency of the [International Press Syndicate](http://www.indepthnews.net). Photo: FAO



By Lisa Vives NEW YORK (IDN | GIN) - The death toll in Ecuador's African coastal communities continues to rise as rescuers dig for survivors of a massive earthquake in the battered villages. On April 18, reports from the Esmeraldas, called the birthplace of Afro-Hispanic culture, estimated that 350 people died in the massive quake that sent buildings tumbling and roads buckling. Over one million African descendants reside in the area settled in the 1600s by escapees from Spanish slave ships. Ecuador's seismological institute reported more than 135 aftershocks following April 16 magnitude-7.8 quake that

ravaged the country's coastline. It was said to be 20 times greater than the quake that hit Japan early April 16. Ecuador could see a greater loss of life and greater damage due to the country's less stringent construction codes. Heavy damage was reported in the cities of Manta, Portoviejo and Guayaquil, which are all several hundred kilometers (miles) from the epicenter of the quake that struck shortly after nightfall April 16. But the loss of life seemed to be far worse in isolated, smaller towns close to the center of the earthquake. President Rafael Correa, who cut short a trip to the Vatican to visit the area, said he feared the number of fatalities would rise. Plus, "Reconstruction will cost billions of dollars," he said, as survivors around him pleaded for water. The last earthquake of a similar magnitude took place in 1979. Fatalities reached 600 with 20,000 injured in the 7.7 magnitude quake, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. Firefighters led rescue operations, combing the area for people trapped in fallen buildings. They injured were transported to the town's football stadium, which survived the quake. Red Cross workers carried supplies to the hilly zone next to Pacific beaches. A power outage kept residents from using their cell phones to contact loved ones. On social media, a video of a baby girl being pulled from beneath a collapsed home in Manta went viral. Afro-Ecuadorians were already dealing with neglect by the administration in the capital Quito, according to the director of Catholic Relief Services, in a radio interview. "Basically you're looking at adding insult to injury because this is a population that's been marginalized. The area is poor and vulnerable with limited services. I'd say an inadequate infrastructure." Relief services director Thomas Hollywood observed: "We have roads that have been ripped up, that have been cracked, that are not passable. We have many homes that have either been completely destroyed or the damage has been so severe that they can no longer be habited. So it's a very difficult situation." Foreign aid workers in the area are also among the victims. Sister Clare Theresa Crockett, a 33-year-old Irish nun who worked at a school in rural Playa Prieta, was crushed by a fallen staircase, Sky News reported. The quake is doubly disastrous for Ecuador due to plunging oil revenues. The main refinery of Esmeraldas was closed as a precaution. Exports of bananas, flowers, cocoa beans and fish could be slowed by ruined roads and port delays. "It's a very distressing and urgent situation we are dealing with," said Renata Dubini, Director of the UN's Refugee Agency Americas Bureau. "As well as hundreds of lives having been lost we're also seeing many people now rendered homeless, including refugees and asylum seekers." Ecuador is the biggest refugee-hosting country in Latin America. Its people have generously welcomed over 200,000 Colombian refugees and others in need of international protection, many of whom had settled in the earthquake-affected areas. Meanwhile, in Rome, Pope Francis offered prayers for the people of Ecuador affected by the violent earthquake. "May the help of God and of neighbours give them strength and support," he said. [IDN-InDepthNews – 19 April 2016] IDN is the flagship of [International Press Syndicate](http://www.indepthnews.net/index.php/the-world/latin-america-the-caribbean/413-ifad-strengthens-partnerships-with-central-america). Photo: People walk among the debris of a collapsed building in the town of Pedernales, Ecuador, following a 7.8 magnitude earthquake. Credit: UNHCR

