**Contribution of the ombudsman for the Defense of Human Rights of El Salvador, José Apolonio Tobar Serrano, referring to the "Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Older Persons in the context of climate change", to be presented to the High Commissioner Office of the United Nations High Commissioner (OHCHR) in the framework of the 47th session.**

1. **Introduction**
2. In our country, year after year, the Salvadoran people are the victim of unfortunate events as a consequence of natural phenomena that result in a disaster, due to social and environmental vulnerability conditions, as well as the consequences of climate change, with serious impacts on the life and property of those vulnerable groups of the population such as the elderly, who for years have endured and continue to suffer its effects.
3. These disasters can be foreseen or at least mitigated, because throughout our history, situations of similar consequences have been experienced, which in addition to violating the human rights of the population, make it increasingly vulnerable, with less capacity to act reaction to future threats and highlight the situation of poverty.
4. As Ombudsman for the Defense of Human Rights, I want to highlight my concern about the impact of climate change on the elderly population, since it creates an immediate and far-reaching threat to the population and the poorest communities and has repercussions on the full enjoyment of human rights, events that are related to a development policy that does not take into account the human and environmental aspects, and that necessarily becomes the cause of new threats, new vulnerability factors and, consequently, new and greater risks susceptible to becoming disasters. For this reason, it is necessary to understand that disasters are unresolved problems of current "development"[[1]](#footnote-1), hence the authorities not only have the obligation, but also the responsibility to change this conception and observe the present problem from the perspective of dignity. and human rights.
5. This Office of ombudsman is of the opinion that once a disaster has occurred, the older persons affected should be protected in a special way against the dangers of possible secondary effects and other risks. Similarly, for people who are sheltered in shelters, it should be taken into account that the longer their displacement lasts in those places, the greater their propensity to continue being victims of human rights violations, beyond those that can be produced during the emergency stage.
6. Therefore, I consider that the actions to be taken in the different events as a consequence of climate change should adhere to what is contained in the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Operational Guidelines of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on the protection of human rights in situations of natural disasters, both United Nations instruments, according to which the affected communities should be consulted in a meaningful way and that they should be given the opportunity to take charge of their own affairs - without neglecting state responsibilities - as well as their participation in the planning and execution of the different stages of disaster response; also contemplating that people affected by a disaster must have the right to easy access to information on “(a) the nature and level of the disaster they face; (b) the possible risk mitigation measures that can be taken; (c) early warning information; and (d) information on ongoing humanitarian assistance, recovery efforts and their respective rights ”.
7. From now on, it must be committed to educating and preparing the population to react adequately to the occurrence of an imminent threat or disaster, in order to guarantee the least amount of damage and loss, both human and material.
8. **Effects of climate change on the Elderly**
9. Old people suffer the worst impacts of natural disasters caused by the effects of climate change, a situation that worsens when affected people have physical limitations that prevent them from accessing information on early warnings, when they have not have been surveyed or mapped, reside in high-risk areas without any company or their family members work far from their home, live in poverty and disasters damage or destroy their homes, crops, livelihoods, farm animals, among others, They also reside in places that are difficult to access, which makes it difficult to evacuate quickly in an emergency situation.
10. El Salvador has not developed to date specific studies to determine the impacts of climate change on population groups in situations of vulnerability, such as the elderly, who as part of the population, suffer the adverse consequences of recurring impacts and increasingly growing phenomena associated with climate change and climate variability.
11. The phenomena that have affected El Salvador and that are associated with climate change, highlight the human rights of the Salvadoran population that are being affected by such phenomena, among them: the right to life, the right to health , the right to housing, the right to water, the right to food, the right to job security, the right to an adequate standard of living, among others.
12. Most of the Older Adults live in poverty. As highlighted in the text of the book "Descartados"[[2]](#footnote-2) is a portrait of poverty and social exclusion of the elderly in rural Salvadoran. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that the poorest will continue to suffer the worst effects of climate change in the form of lost income and livelihood opportunities, displacement, hunger and detrimental effects on health. Multiple and intersectional discrimination factors related to gender, age, displacement, indigenous origin or minority status further exacerbate older adults' risk of experiencing the negative effects of climate change.[[3]](#footnote-3)
13. **Health**
14. The quality of life of older adults is related to their functional capacity and to the set of conditions that allow them to take care of themselves and participate in family and social life.
15. 12. There is growing concern on the part of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) about the need to readjust health services to meet the needs of a growing older adult population. This requires tackling current difficulties that concern the following issues:

*\* Lack of trained personnel to care for the elderly:*

*All older adults have the right to be cared for by health personnel who have received appropriate training in the management of the most common health problems in old age. However, health personnel in our country lack education or training in aging and gerontology or geriatrics.*

*\* Lack of comprehensive care:*

*Every day and with more frequency, the elderly who attend the different Health Centers represent higher rates of hospital admissions and consume, in proportion to the rest of the population, a greater number of medications. However, the health service is not the most adequate in coordination with the needs of this population, so their appointments with specialist doctors have to wait an approximate time of six to nine months, also, it has not been possible to guarantee the existence and supply of medicines that, on a daily basis, the older adult population that uses health services.*

*\* Lack of research and monitoring:*

*El Salvador does not have an epidemiological study of aging and the impact of diseases related to old age on individuals, families, and services. There is no research on risk factors and changing harmful behaviors in people 60 years and older.*

1. Old age is the first cause of disability and is a stage in which the quality of life is drastically reduced due to ailments such as blindness, deafness, arthritis, irritable bowel, hypertension, anemia and other infectious diseases , parasitic and allergic. It is common for the poorest older people to receive no medical diagnosis or treatment. Access to health care is conditioned by the remoteness of the Care Centers, the shortage of personnel, excessive waits, unskilled care, lack of medicines, among others.[[4]](#footnote-4)
2. Older adults are vulnerable to the health impacts related to climate change for several reasons. One of them is the common changes that occur in the body due to aging, such as loss of muscle tone and bone density, which can reduce mobility. Older adults are more likely to have a chronic disease, such as diabetes, that requires the use of medications to treat it. Some older adults, especially those with some difficulty, may need help with their daily activities, which may include disabilities in one or more aspects of communication (seeing, hearing, or speaking), cognitive functions (such as illness Alzheimer's disease, senility or dementia), and physical functioning (reduced or no ability to walk, climb stairs, or lift or hold objects).
3. In the case of, for example, an extreme event that requires evacuation, older adults are exposed to a greater risk of suffering impacts on their health, both physical and mental. Older adults may have less access to information and the ability to follow emergency instructions to act on them, or to communicate their needs in an emergency or evacuation situation.
4. **Food Security: high cost of living and increase in the basic food basket**
5. The development of the countries of the Central American region is being impacted by the effects of climate change, so the fight against poverty and climate change must be an interrelated effort. The change and associated variability of the climate already observed in El Salvador, together with the high levels of socio-economic and environmental vulnerability, are generating negative impacts on the different socio-economic sectors, ecosystems and human populations, particularly in those most economically disadvantaged and exposed to multiple risks, and in which women and children constitute a high proportion.
6. El Salvador has suffered several climatic phenomena of great magnitude in the last three years, among them: tropical storms Ida, Agatha, Alex and Mathew and tropical depression 12E and only in the last year 2020 four climatic phenomena have been reported: tropical storms Amanda, Cristóbal, Eta and Iota; causing human losses, thousands of people forced to shelter and causing millionaire losses. The increase in temperatures and the subsequent loss of soil moisture have reduced the availability of surface and underground water, which, together with changes in monthly rainfall patterns and the increase in the occurrence of more intense rains and hurricanes, has impacted agricultural productivity and production, generating problems of food insecurity, abandonment of agriculture and rural areas.
7. Storms Amanda and Cristóbal have left heavy losses on Salvadoran crops. According to initial estimates made by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG)[[5]](#footnote-5) there are $ 22.1 million lost in the sectors of basic grains, vegetables and fruits. To this figure are added damages in livestock items, such as livestock, aquaculture and poultry.
8. Between May 29 and June 5, the portfolio registered 22,476 affected basic grain producers in 65 municipalities where the inspection was carried out. They estimate some 15,121 cultivated apples of damaged corn that would have produced 284,411 quintals; in addition, 1,121 apples of beans that would have harvested 7,907 quintals; and 1,092 of rice, which imply a loss of 55,026 quintals (La Prensa Gr[[6]](#footnote-6)áfica, June 7, 2020).
9. This implies a loss of $ 5.6 million in basic grains, at wholesale prices, most of it in corn production, with $ 3.9 million and almost one million in the case of rice. In the case of beans, the losses have not been so large since most are sown in the second season.
10. In the case of fruits, 1,087 apples are affected with 233,449 quintals, which implies an economic loss of $ 5.2 million. The strongest economic impact is in the horticultural sector, with 2,334 damaged apples and 451,876 quintals lost, that is, $ 11.3 million. (La Prensa Gráfica , June 7, 2020).
11. Like the rest of Central America, El Salvador has two very marked seasons: the dry season (November-April) and the rainy season (May-October), with a period called dog days that can appear between July and August. in which a reduction or absence of rainfall is experienced. Agricultural production depends largely on the regularity of these cycles, especially basic grains (corn, beans and to a lesser extent rice), essential for the population's food security (García, 2009, cited by Luna and Cuellar, 2017).[[7]](#footnote-7)
12. Therefore, when observing the statistics on basic basket prices provided by the General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses DIGESTYC 2019 and 2020[[8]](#footnote-8), it is possible to study the impact on food security that meteorological changes produce both in urban and rural areas.
13. Al efectuar una comparación desde el 2010 al 2020 en el valor de canasta básica individual por día en donde el gasto individual por persona es de $1.31 para el 2015 se da una alza de $1.55, mientras que para el 2020 es de $1.63, así como por familia en 2010 era de $5.36, 2015 $6.36 y 2020 $6.68; y su costo total 2010 $160.87, mientras que para el 2015 fue de $190.66 y 2020 se mantiene un alza de $200.41, se observa la tendencia a la alza en el precio de la mayoría de productos de la canasta básica para la zona urbana (ver figura 1).

**Figure 1:** Comparison of individual and family expenses and monthly cost per family Urban area, own elaboration, taking data from the General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses DIGESTYC

1. A different phenomenon occurs in the Rural area because for 2010 individual spending amounted to 0.80, for 2015 it was 1.68 and in 2020 it started with 1.03; While in 2010 daily expenses per family was 3.74, for 2015 there is a considered rise of 6.88, and in 2020 there is a decrease of 4.85, in terms of monthly expenses per family 112.18, while in 2015 there is a rise of 205.54 and then there is a reduction of 145.4 for 2020 (see figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Comparison of individual and family expenses and monthly cost per family Rural area, own elaboration, taking data from the General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses DIGESTYC.

1. In both figures the upward trend is observed, maintaining food expenses individually and family.
2. Climate change affects the possibilities of some communities to feed themselves, and the number of people affected will increase as the temperature rises.[[9]](#footnote-9) Decreased food production will have negative effects on people already living in poverty, including people with disabilities, many of whom may be older people, who are more likely to live in poverty than others.[[10]](#footnote-10) Climate change is expected to exacerbate food shortages and malnutrition in the world's poorest regions, as well as adversely affect livelihoods from agriculture and community initiatives.
3. The income of the Elderly People in the Salvadoran rural area is determined by three main sources: family, work and pensions. The family assumes, often with serious financial difficulties, most of the maintenance. Work in rural areas is scarce, informal, unstable and poorly paid, and there is no age to retire. The pension system covers one in four people over 60 years of age. The minimum contributory pension is $ 207. Those who contributed less than what was required do not receive anything, unless they are recognized as veterans or crippled of the Salvadoran civil war (1980-1992) or are part of the 31 thousand "privileged" over 70 years in extreme poverty who receive $ 50 dollars a month and that barely represents 20% of the elderly who need economic income.[[11]](#footnote-11)
4. **Adequate housing**
5. Climate change affects the rights of Older Adults related to adequate housing. The lack of their own home or decent housing was one of the greatest exposures of the elderly; According to the consultation carried out for the construction of the Public Policy for Older Adults, many women are heads of household and do not have adequate housing spaces, additionally, they have little knowledge about the existence of homes and shelters available for older adults , who cannot live with a member of their family.[[12]](#footnote-12)
6. Older Adults often face obstacles in finding affordable housing, and climate change can further reduce the availability of adequate housing.
7. Half of the Salvadoran families do not own the space they inhabit and about 150 thousand reside in loaned properties, with no guarantee of permanence. More than 400 thousand homes in the country have essential deficiencies for habitability due to the insecurity of the construction, the low quality of the materials or the lack of sanitary services, running water or electricity. 67% of these houses are concentrated in rural areas, sometimes in isolated areas with difficult access. One in three rural households are overcrowded. In a hostile habitat, poor Older Adults are especially vulnerable.[[13]](#footnote-13)
8. Depending on where they live, some older adults may be more vulnerable than others to the effects of climate change. The increasing severity of tropical storms can pose risks to older adults living in coastal and volcanic areas.
9. Climate change influences the frequency and intensity of some extreme weather events, such as floods (related to heavy rains, hurricanes and coastal storms). Older adults are more likely to die or suffer major losses from storm and flood-related causes. For example, Juan Manuel Mendoza, 76, lost his home as a result of Depression 2-E that became Tropical Storm Amanda. "My wife yelled at me:‘ Get out! ’, But a door would not let me out because I was spinning with the whirlpool that had been made, and with the water up to my chest I managed to get out," he said. The families had to walk, with the pets they rescued, to the Multipara mall area, to save themselves from the water current (Carolina Amaya, June 14, 2020).[[14]](#footnote-14)
10. If an extreme event requires leaving a place, older adults are at higher risk of suffering impacts on physical and mental health. Some of the most vulnerable people are those with disabilities, chronic illnesses, or those who live in nursing homes.
11. **Human rights-based and inclusive approaches of older persons to climate action**
12. **Regulatory and Policy Framework:**

1. For the moment, El Salvador has diverse general regulations that help promote a climate change mitigation and adaptation approach, among which the following are cited:

* Constitution of the Republic, which recognizes the human person as the origin and purpose of the State and that it is the duty of the State to protect natural resources, as well as the diversity and integrity of the environment, declaring the protection, conservation, rational use, restoration or substitution of natural resources and that it is the obligation of the State to ensure to the inhabitants of the Republic, the enjoyment of freedom, health, culture, economic well-being and social justice; that "Every person has the right to life, physical and moral integrity", among others;
* United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) ratified by El Salvador in August 1995;
* The 1998 Environmental Law, amended in 2012, to which a full title was added referring to “Adaptation to Climate Change”;
* National Environmental Policy (2012); Its general objective is to reverse environmental degradation and reduce vulnerability to climate change;
* The First National Climate Change Plan has as its main objective: “to build a society and an economy that is resilient to climate change and low in carbon”;[[15]](#footnote-15)
* National Climate Change Strategy, is one of the instruments of the National Environmental Policy;[[16]](#footnote-16)
* Environmental Strategy for Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change of the Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing and Aquaculture Sector;
* National Food and Nutrition Security Policy;
* Proposal for a Climate Change and Health Policy, aimed at preventing, adapting and mitigating the effects of climate change;
* National Program for the Restoration of Ecosystems and Landscapes (PREP), which seeks to establish agricultural production systems that are more resilient to the climate and friendly to biodiversity.

1. **Good practices**
2. Some good practices are highlighted below to promote inclusive climate action for people with disabilities and the elderly in comprehensive disaster risk management at the Central American level.

1. 37. His contributions include a series of documents that have been prepared within the framework of the Project “Inclusion of People with Disabilities and Older Adults in Disaster Risk Management in Central America”, executed by the Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland eV (ASB), together with the Nicaraguan Federation of the Association of People with Disabilities (FECONORI) and the “Foundation for Cooperation and Community Development of El Salvador” (CORDES), with the financial support of the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development ( BMZ) of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, whose terms of incidence are: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.[[17]](#footnote-17)
2. The first document within the good practices: **Community Guide on the Inclusion of People with Disabilities and Older People in the Comprehensive Management of Disaster Risks in Central America:**
3. The objective of this guide is aimed at rural and urban communities in the Central American region, people with disabilities and older adults, their caregivers and family members, as well as public and private authorities and institutions related to the prevention and management of disasters, whose purpose is to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities and older adults as active and participatory people in the processes of comprehensive disaster risk management, and to improve the quality of care and humanitarian response in emergencies and / or disasters.
4. The construction of this guide is done through consultation through focus groups of people with disabilities and older adults in the Central American region and is divided into seven modules broken down as follows:

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| Module 1. Conceptual Framework  Module 2: inclusive community plans.  Module 3: inclusive early warning system.  Module 4: Inclusive Evacuation, Search and Rescue.  Module 5: Inclusive temporary shelters.  Module 6: Inclusive family plans.  Module 7: Advocacy and community networks. |

1. Each module is divided into two parts: The first part shows the learning objectives, basic concepts, key messages, relevant and resources. While a second part shows the facilitator the methodology to be implemented, materials and tools that will be implemented in the development of the activities. The suggested design in hours of the modules is a total of eight hours, taking the sequence of each module. For development, the participation of between 15 to 25 people is wanted. The place is suggested must have all the conditions of accessibility and suitability for inclusion.
2. A second document: Minimum **Standards for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities and Older People in emergencies and disasters. Adaptation to Central America.**
3. This document is a follow-up to the previous one, promoted by the same cooperant and institutions, aimed at providing guidelines for comprehensive disaster care for people with disabilities and the elderly. The origin of these standards provided by UNICEF for the protection and care of people with disabilities in emergencies, also elaborated in conjunction with USAID, also has its pilot version in 2015 of Minimum Standards for the inclusion of elderly and disabled people in humanitarian action, prepared by ADCAP.
4. 44. This adaptation was carried out from December 2016 to May 2017. Through a process of consultation with people with disabilities and the elderly, as well as in consultation with organizations and institutions that work on disaster and risk management. The methodology implemented for its consultation was through consultation workshops in four countries of the region, whose feedback is given due to the usefulness, implementation and ease of humanitarian aid.
5. The document is divided into two sessions:

* **First section:** basic conceptual elements and international legal framework are provided, as well as principles on disability and age in emergency situations.
* **Second section**: it offers a set of standards which are divided into two broad categories: **i. Essential norms**: These norms serve to ensure that the main aspects of persons with disabilities and older persons are taken into consideration in the different instruments of preparation, response and recovery from disasters; **ii. Specific norms**: These norms identify actions and instruments that must be developed in the different specific areas of humanitarian assistance, to ensure the protection and care of people with disabilities and the elderly in disasters.

1. ​​It should be noted that each **standard contains statements, actions and good practices.** The statements relate to the description of what must be accomplished in each essential area and sector of humanitarian assistance to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities and older persons. **The key actions** are guidelines to comply with the rules, establishing in detail the suggested actions for this purpose. It should be considered that these actions should be adapted to each context, presenting examples for their application. In this sense, **good practices** are also presented, experiences developed in the region that contribute to the inclusion of people with disabilities and the elderly. For the socialization of these guides, two more instruments were developed for education in early and second childhood, as well as in the adolescent population.
2. Third and Fourth document: Inclusive **Disaster Risk Management in Disability and Older Adults, book for primary and secondary school students.**
3. The first one, which is for primary education, is made up of four thematic units,

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| Unit One: We are all different and Valuable.  Unit two: Learning from our Elders  Unit three: I prepare for disasters and catastrophes.  Unit four: "Inclusion League", Together we will make our inclusive evacuation plan!  Cuttable material  Section for the teacher. |

1. The second book is made up of five thematic units

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| Unit one: What are we talking about? People with disabilities.  Unit two: Older Adults.  Unit three: Emergencies and Catastrophes, What we need to know.  Unit four: Inclusive emergency plans, in Disability and the Elderly.  Unit Five: I am ready to do inclusive disaster risk reduction.  Teachers section. |

1. Both documents raise the barriers that people with disabilities and the elderly face in response to the State and community's response to the risk of Disasters.
2. **Conclusions**
3. Older Adults are at greater risk of suffering the adverse effects of climate change due to various social and economic factors. Poverty, discrimination and stigma are the main elements that influence the exposure of older people to the effects of climate change. Cross-cutting axes related to gender, age, geographical location, disability, sex could place older adults at a higher risk of experiencing the adverse effects of climate change, especially on health, food security, housing, water, livelihoods and travel.
4. It is essential that in the construction of national mitigation strategies, the meaningful participation of older persons in all decision-making processes and their specific vulnerabilities be taken into account. The adoption of an inclusive approach to aging in a changing climate environment is essential, with the aim of building adequate policies and empowering older people as agents of change, which will prevent discrimination against them and increase the effectiveness of action climatic.
5. It is necessary to proceed at the State level in the creation and implementation of a Risk Prevention Policy, whose objective is focused on the protection of the human person, his life and integrity, as well as his belongings. In order to address the adverse effects of climate change on the effective enjoyment of human rights by older people, urgent climate action is needed that is rights-based and inclusive of the aging population.

El Salvador, San Salvador 2020.

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