



# Honduras

**Lent 2011**

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# Honduras at a glance

- **Capital:** Tegucigalpa
- **Languages:** Spanish with local dialects.
- **Population:** 7,616,000
- **Ethnic Groups:** Mestizo (both European and indigenous origins), small numbers of indigenous- Miskitos, Lenca, Chorti
- **Religions:** 97% Catholic, 2% other Christian Denominations, >1% Jewish, Muslim and other.
- **Area:** 112,492 km<sup>2</sup> (approximately 30km<sup>2</sup> larger than Ireland)
- **Border countries:** Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala. The Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean.
- **Landscape:** Mainly tropical forests and plantations.

# Images of Honduras



Left: The blue stripes of the Honduran flag are said to represent the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea with the five stars standing for the five Central American nations - Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

Right: One of the most famous landmarks in Honduras is Copán Ruins in the western part of the country. Built between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, this was once a dominant city in the Mayan Kingdom, one of the indigenous tribes of Central America



# Economics in Honduras

- The economy dominated by export goods mainly for the USA market - bananas, coffee, apparel (clothes), African palm oil for industrial use.
- Third poorest country in Central America and the Caribbean (after Haiti and Nicaragua), 64.5% of population live in poverty.
- Highly unequal distribution of wealth and resources, including land: 18% of population have no access to health services.
- 25% of children are chronically malnourished.

# Poverty in Honduras

- A rural face: 72% of people in rural areas live in poverty.
- Lack of access to land, 2% of landowners own more than 40% of land
- Eight out of every ten rural families: no land or insufficient access to land to provide for food needs.
- Little support to agriculture from the government, most farmers are subsistence farmers who do not have the opportunities or support to develop their farms.
- Farms are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters: hurricanes and flooding e.g. Hurricane Mitch 1998: 5000 people died, 1.5 million displaced
- Widespread deforestation: between 1990 and 2005, 37% of Honduran forests disappeared.

# Politics in Honduras

- Until the 1980s Honduran politics were dominated by the military.
- Now it is still largely controlled by a small elite.
- The high levels of corruption and violent crime (murder rate of 66.8 for every 100,000 inhabitants) are mostly related to drug trafficking.
- High levels of violence against human rights defenders, activists calling for reform and social leaders.

# The coup d'état June 2009

- The democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya deposed in a military coup d'état.
- Reports of serious human rights violations by the security forces in the aftermath.
- These violations were condemned by the international community (the UN and NGOs)
- Elections held in November 2009, brought Porfirio Lobo to power, though the country is still divided.
- There are ongoing concerns about the human rights situation, continuing violence against human rights defenders and social leaders.

# Trócaire in Honduras

- Trócaire has been active in Central America since the 1970s.
- In 1994 we opened our regional office in Tegucigalpa.
- Through partners (local non-profit organisations) Trócaire works with poor and vulnerable groups in rural areas to increase their incomes, gain access to land, develop sustainable agricultural techniques to cope with climate change
- We also support national and local organisations to carry out advocacy and lobbying to gain access to resources for the poor.