



# CASE STUDIES:

CLIMATE CHANGE LOSS AND  
DAMAGE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES  
IN HONDURAS AND COLOMBIA

2024

**LaRutadelClima**



## CREDITS

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# SOCIAL AND CLIMATE RESEARCH: STORIES FROM RURAL COMMUNITIES IN FACING CLIMATE CHANGE

The stories of rural communities narrated in this document result from a climate, social, and participatory research process, with an intersectional focus on gender and citizen science. This process involved developing a method of rapprochement and following up with five rural communities in two Latin American countries.

In Honduras, the Department of Choluteca was visited, specifically the Municipality of Marcovia located on the Pacific coast, where work started with the communities of Cedeño, Colonia 3 de Febrero, and El Venado. In Colombia, the process was implemented in the municipalities of Barrancas and Urumita, located in the middle and lower Guajira, a region in the southern Caribbean of the country bordering Venezuela.

The main objective of this research was to develop a participatory process for systematizing loss and damage derived from climate change reported by and from the communities. Community stories were also learned and analyzed as examples that help measure and make visible the impacts and effects of climate change on rural Latin American communities.

This process included developing a loss and damage categorization model. This model is based on classification by type of impact and by impact characteristics (Table 1). The community, health, and infrastructure were proposed for the kind of affectation, damage, and environmental losses. For the characterization of the impact, a subclassification was proposed that considered the time of evolution, the quantification, and the material or immaterial condition of the impact.

Table 1. Description of loss and damage categories by type of damage and impact characteristics

## Categories for the study of Loss and Damage

Type of impact	Characteristics of the impact
Environmental Infrastructure Health Community	Impact over time • Long Term • Short Term  Impact by Type • Material • Immaterial  Quantifying the impact • Quantifiable • Partially quantifiable • Not quantifiable

In addition to the categorization model, two field visits were made to the abovementioned communities. A participatory consultation process was carried out during the visits involving 98 people. The process included three ethnographic tours, eight community dialogues, and interviews with community members. This fieldwork concluded with three main results, the first being that the population perceives drastic changes in water and temperature patterns in the five communities.

The second is linked to the fact that people in the communities associate drastic changes in the climate with loss and damage and identify impacts in the proposed categories. Finally, the third result relates to the interest and motivation shown by populations to monitor and report loss and damage from climate change.

This work was possible thanks to the voluntary participation of the people of the communities, as well as the logistical support, convening, and coordination with grassroots organizations and communities by OXFAM and CODDEFAGOLF in Honduras and ClimaLab in Colombia.

## COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

### Honduras: Communities of the coastal strip of the Gulf of Fonseca. Cedeño, Colonia 3 de Febrero and Venado

The three communities worked with in Honduras are Cedeño, Colonia 3 de Febrero, and Venado. These belong to the Department of Choluteca and the Municipality of Marcovia and are part of the coast of the Gulf of Fonseca (Figure 1), a region located in the Central American Pacific. The three communities are very close (Figure 2) in their maritime-terrestrial territory, with two countries: El Salvador to the northeast and Nicaragua to the south.

Figure 1. Gulf of Fonseca



Source: Google Maps, 2024<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Google Maps. (2024, March 15). <https://maps.app.goo.gl/CyDZLkU8f3Y67XwGA>

Figure 2. Honduran Gulf of Fonseca Coast



Left: Nicaraguan territory can be seen in the background.  
Source: La Ruta del Clima(2023)..



/ Right: Salvadoran territory can be seen in the background.

The communities are settled in a humid and warm region, with the presence of an essential diversity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems, including grasslands, tropical dry forest, mangroves and wetlands, rivers, and intertidal zones such as estuaries and seasonal lagoons (MARN, 2014).<sup>2</sup>

All of the above serve as home to a considerable number of species that provide communities with ecosystem services such as food provision (a primary activity for food security), recreation and nature-based cultural and spiritual activities, temperature and air quality regulation, coastal erosion control, water supply, and raw materials for local economies (WHSRH, 2022)<sup>3</sup>.

Among these ecosystem services, the central relevance of the mangrove for the communities visited is particularly noteworthy (Figure 3).

Specifically in the household economy, as it is a source of energy for the preparation of food and raw materials for the development of family and community infrastructure, and in addition to a community and environmental importance as it is associated with the reforestation of the mangrove as an activity to care for the ecosystem and as an action of climate adaptation, coastal erosion mitigation and disaster prevention.

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of the Government of Honduras. (2014). Fauna and Flora in the Gulf of Fonseca. United Nations Development Programme. <http://rcc.marn.gob.sv/bitstream/handle/123456789/15/Fauna%20y%20Flora%20en%20el%20Golfo%20de%20Fonseca.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>3</sup> Executive Office of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRH). (2022, May 06). Gulf of Fonseca: Building Teams in Honduras through Knowledge of the Benefits of Nature. <http://rcc.marn.gob.sv/handle/123456789/15>

Figure 3. Women collecting and preparing mangroves for household use.



Source: La Ruta del Clima(2023)..

According to community members, the inhabitants of the Gulf are peasant and fishing families that have lived in the territory since the middle of the last century. They were resettled after the Honduran agrarian reform process ceded them the land.

The localeconomy in this area is not very diverse and is highly dependent on extractive activities such as the cultivation of shrimp, melon, sugarcane, and corn, all activities that, according to local people, offer few employment options and low-paid, low-quality jobs that involve constant exposure to toxic substances that contaminate their bodies and local ecosystems.

“There’s a poison there [...] and to kill the shrimp, they empty a whole bag of that, and they made me pour that poison, and they gave me a double mask, they gave me a hat, a jacket, and gloves because that thing peeled one’s hands and at the time that the harvest ended all that water was thrown into the estuary”

- A man from the community of El Venado, 2023.

The contamination of local ecosystems is a constant concern for the Honduran communities consulted, not only from local extractive activities but also from the dragging of waste from mining activities in the upper part of the basin of the Department of Choluteca. For the participants, the presence of pollutants in ecosystems causes a growing problem that

translates into anguish and fear as it has increased health problems, including a higher incidence of cancer and liver problems, particularly in women.

Although the region was once a tourist inn, all the communities visited define themselves as having a fishing tradition. The main income-generating economic activities are fishing, a practice historically carried out by men, and, on a smaller scale, the production and sale of tortillas by women. This is evidence of an economy marked by a strong gender division of labor.

It is essential to highlight the existence of a small family economy based on the small-scale production of crops and domestic animals for self-subsistence, which female domestic workers primarily carry out. This activity is crucial for providing food security to families. Still, as an economic activity, it is insufficient because the capacity to generate financial income from it is inadequate to sustain a family financially.

In resonance, it is relevant to highlight that during the participatory process, it was observed the fact that in recent years, women, and increasingly, have been linked to mangrove recovery and reforestation projects, as well as their crucial role in the production of curil, positioning them as key protagonists in their community, both for the economic contribution they give to their families and for the conservation work they carry out. Although there are marked gender roles in community management, in all the communities visited, women have a central role in the care of the ecosystem and the community fabric, as well as the presence of women leaders or with profiles with leadership potential.

In this context, the low diversity of income-generating activities is the primary condition that enhances regional vulnerabilities. Especially since many practices crucial to the local economy have become unsustainable due to drastic changes in the local landscape and climate. These include fishing, mangrove use, and tourism.

“There is a curil harvest, but there is no market. It’s like when they say, “When there’s meat, there’s no tortilla, and when there’s no tortilla, there’s meat”

- A woman from the community of Colonia 3 de Febrero, 2023.

Although mangroves are essential for local cooking and building activities, even on a small scale, their use has been significantly reduced due to the urgent need to minimize mangrove logging and extraction as much as possible to maintain local biodiversity and protect coastlines from disasters.

On the other hand, fishing, as the main economic activity in the region, is at a critical point due to causes such as the

scarcity and reduction of species derived from the increase in sea temperatures and the lack of regulation in practice at the local level. This situation has led to a drastic increase in hunger in the region, a negative impact on coastal families, and the growth of transboundary conflicts in marine-coastal territories due to the desperation of fishermen who cross to international waters to be able to fish.

“Our country, Honduras, in short, did not take care of the fish species. Now, we have to go to the side of Nicaragua and El Salvador. And what happens? When you get into Nicaraguan waters, the patrol boats there grab you and take away your engine, the boats, everything, and even put you in prison”  
- A man from the community of El Venado, 2023.

In this context, the local population's vulnerability is exacerbated by the systematic violation of fundamental human rights, such as access to a healthy environment, water and sanitation, quality education, and decent employment.

In all the communities visited, there are high rates of unemployment, particularly among young people, which is evidence of the non-exercise of the right to decent employment, exacerbated by the low labor supply. This reality, together with the low level of schooling in the communities—a context that stands out in facing the low presence of educational institutions in the region, which means that to access higher and university education, it is necessary to migrate—aggravates the living conditions of the populations of the three communities.

“I think that out of 100% of the young people in our community, I don't think even 1% go to college. I'm telling you, out of 100, maybe 1”  
- Man from El Venado, 2023.

Systematic human rights violations also result from the absence of infrastructure guaranteeing the continuous and quality provision of drinking water, electricity, internet connection, decent housing, and solid waste collection. The latter stands out because this omission generates, as an indirect consequence, massive solid waste contamination in the territory due to the lack of comprehensive solutions for its treatment.

This failure to guarantee human rights has a multi-causal root. Two central aspects stand out: the absence of state institutions that ensure these rights, precedents of failed resettlement processes due to the lack of adaptation criteria, and situations that result in the normalization of this reality by the communities.

In contrast to this context, local populations describe their communities as healthy and peaceful places, particularly in comparison to the crime and violence other regions in the country are facing.

Facing this panorama, communities resist in various ways, but they are generally characterized by solidarity, community-based action, the work of women as caretakers of the ecosystem and their homes, and a growing awareness of urgent action to address the ever-increasing climate emergency.

## Colombia: La Guajira, communities of Barrancas and Urumita

In Colombia, the Guajira region was visited (Figure 4), a Colombian department located in the northern part of the country bordered north and west by the Caribbean Sea and to the east by Venezuela. As it is located in the intertropical zone, it manages all thermal floors and average temperatures between 35-40°C, which produces a high diversity of ecosystems, among which desert and semi-desert regions, dry and humid tropical forest stand out (Government of Colombia, 2024)<sup>4</sup>. Due to its broad territorial extension, the area is divided into the low, middle, and upper Guajira; for the development of this research, we worked with the communities of Barrancas and Urumita located in the lower and middle Guajira, respectively.

Figure 4. La Guajira, Colombia



Fuente: Google Maps, 2024<sup>5</sup>

Barrancas, a municipality with landscapes marked by semi-arid regions and dry tropical forests, is located to the left of the Ranchería River, one of the most important in the region. Its landscape contrasts with that of the municipality of Urumita, which sits in a valley of the Perijá mountain range. Urumita is an urban plan surrounded by mountains that protect important extensions of humid and dry tropical forests.

The contrast between the two communities is not restricted exclusively to their landscape; other elements, such as their populations, coexist that make these spaces different.

According to data from the National Population and Housing Census (DANE, 2018), the indigenous and Afro-Colombian population in Barrancas corresponds to 55.3% of the total population, while in Urumita, these population groups barely reach 8.9%. This fact makes Barrancas a diverse and multicultural community, in which an essential part of the population is made up of people from the original Wayú people — from whose language the Wayuunaiki derives the name of the department La Wajira — and another essential part of the population is of African descent.

We recognize ourselves as Afro-descendants and as peasants.

Our families had inhabited our territories of origin for nearly 400 years, when our ancestors, blacks who were enslaved from Central Africa, were forcibly brought to the La Guajira peninsula in the middle of the colonial period

- Negras sources, 20217.

Despite this difference, there are two similarities; one concerns their traditions, which are protected by oral tradition, in the case of Barrancas, from stories, stories, and narratives that involve the everyday cultural practices and the worldviews of the people that make them up. In the case of Uromita, Vallenato stands out as a musical genre of local origin and of great cultural, community, and economic importance in the region. The oral tradition in La Guajira inherits ancestral knowledge from generation to generation that is of great spiritual and community significance.

The second similarity corresponds to the fact that peasant and agricultural customs define both communities; in the case of Barrancas, the characteristic of cattle ranching is added, where the breeding of animals such as goats has a special place in the community constitution. These customs are not only the main economic activities of the region, together with mining but also in the region of La Guajira, specifically in the municipality of Barrancas, where one of the largest coal mines in the world is located and which has generated negative impacts both at the environmental and community level.

Figure 5. Local painting of Barrancas

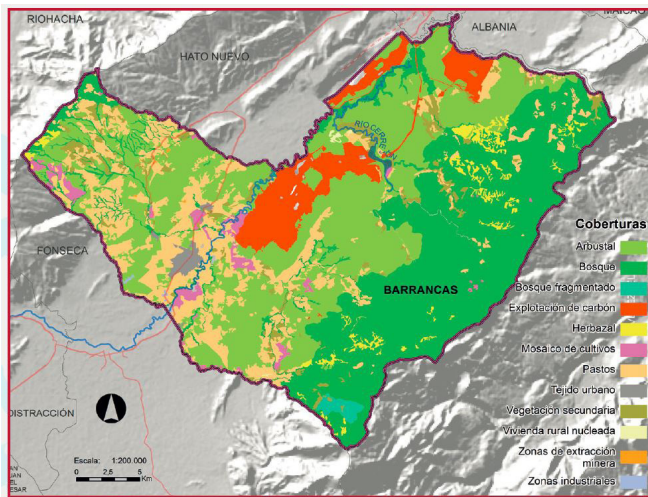


Horse (of Spanish origin) with Wayú ornaments in a mining field. Source: La Ruta del Clima(2023)..

“Here in this area where we are (mining territory), around 15 Afro and 3 Wayú communities were taken out, of the 25 that have disappeared [...] We are talking about 250-300 families [...] displacement that took place between 1990 and 2000.”  
 - A man from the community of Barrancas, 2023.

During the community visits, we talked and worked mainly with women. In Barrancas, Afro-peasant women met and are surviving and resisting the process of dispossession derived from the mining enclave of the Glencore company, which is responsible for artificially transforming the landscape into a large area of territory, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Ecosystem Coverage in Barrancas



Source: USAID. (2020)<sup>6</sup>

In the Afro-peasant tradition of Barrancas, there is an important matrilineal tradition that means that women, especially older women (mayoras), are considered the wisest guardians of ancestral knowledge and crucial to the survival of the community and people.

In Urumita, we spoke with women coffee growers who promote ecologically responsible agricultural practices in opposition to the indiscriminate use of agrotoxins and monocultures. At the same time, they break with traditional gender roles by appropriating the performance of cultivation and harvesting work on their farms.

Both communities have histories that mark their relationship with the territories, their practices, and climate actions. Due to the beautiful gardens that adorn the urban area, the Jardín de la Guajira (Figure 7), as Urumita is known, experienced the consequences of the violence derived from the armed conflict in Colombia.

Figure 7. Landscape of Urumita



The central square of Urumita  
 Source: La Ruta del Clima(2023).

It was a social and historical event that caused deaths, non-compliance with human rights, and periods of land usurpation by paramilitaries and agents of the national army. Wounds that, although they have healed thanks to community action, are present in the local memory; For example, the loss of crops due to pesticide spraying by the national government as a measure to put an end to illicit monocultures of poppy and marijuana.

The situation in Barrancas today is complex. The local inhabitants weave a history marked by dispossession, forced displacement, and resettlement, as well as resistance efforts against the mine that bears the same name as the hill considered sacred by the Afro-peasant communities and the Wayú people: the “Cerrejón.” In addition, structural elements increase the difficulties and effects to which the people of the community are exposed.

“The women who live in the resettlement have been significantly affected by this process because, by being displaced from our territories, we have gone from being working and producing women to being unemployed and unproductive”  
 - Negras sources, 20219.

These two communities, too, are facing conditions of vulnerability. For Barrancas, it is inevitable not to think of coal extraction as a factor that exacerbates and breaks their living conditions and increases the ecological consequences. The Afro-peasant women of Barrancas observe in the establishment of the mining enclave the

emergence of double violence: the dispossession and loss of their territory of origin and the generation of multiple and complex community and environmental conflicts. They also emphasize the impacts of the mine, aggravated in the territories closest to the extraction sites, where the presence of pollutants in water, soil, and air is highest.

The main vulnerability identified in Urumita is the difficult access to coffee farms in the Perijá mountain range, which complicates people's mobility and especially the trade of coffee and agricultural products for local consumption. This is in addition to the low supply of jobs outside of agricultural activities since, although work is being done to promote rural community tourism, this process is in the initial stages.

Both communities experience structural elements that affect people's quality of life, such as access to education and the offer of decent and quality jobs. These events impact people's physical and mental health, separation from families, and uprooting from communities and people. Facing this panorama, the Afro-peasant populations of Barrancas resist the systematic violation of their human rights, as well as the lack of respect for the right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment. This situation is aggravated by the violation of the right to a complaint, prompt and complete justice, and freedom of expression as a result of constant intimidation, death threats, and persecution experienced by human rights defenders, especially those who speak out against the mining enclave.

It is evident that in both communities, women lead the processes of resistance and survival against complicated climatic contexts. The women of Barrancas, from the point of view of resistance, the conservation of the memory of ancestral practices, the cultivation of hope in community spaces, and joy as a strategy of sustainability and resistance. The women of Urumita, from their relationship with the land, plants, and fruits, lead agroecological activities and articulate community organization.

## LOSS AND DAMAGE: FACING CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON TERRITORIES

### “The cycle is broken.” Perceptions of Climate Change in Communities

“The Cycle Was Broken,”  
- Woman of the community of Urumita, 2023.

“30-40 years ago, you woke up in the morning, and the cloud was low; the weather was cool. In this community, the fog always dawned low in the streets. You could see plants growing in the trees because there was humidity. You can't see that cloud now. The morning is now hot.”  
- Woman of the community of Urumita, 2023.

To talk about and reflect on loss and damage in communities, it was first necessary to refer to climate change, fundamentally to the meaning of climate change from their realities, how it is observed and experienced, and what consequences it has on their day-to-day lives.

People associate climate change with rising temperatures and changes in rainfall periods and intensity in the five communities visited. In general, climate change is related to negative elements; for example, women in the community of Barranca alluded to climate change being a “transformation, but for the worse” or as “something negative that brings suffering.”

In all the communities visited, the population perceives drastic changes in the local water and temperature cycles, especially in the rainfall irregularity and the inconsistency of the dry or rainy months and seasons. This aspect affects agricultural activities, which depend on the natural water and flowering cycles.

“It's supposed to be November, summertime, but it has rained more than in October, which was supposed to be winter.”  
- A man from the community of Urumita, 2023.

The perception of seasonal changes was particularly marked when talking with the women farmers of the community of Urumita, a peasant village with an oral tradition associated with vallenato:

“In the harvest time, the second (harvest) began on March 22, so everyone would have to be at work on March 22 because the rains were supposed to start on that date. But not anymore; now people do their jobs and lose money”  
- Woman from the community of Urumita, 2023

When community members are asked about what climate changes they perceive in recent decades, they identify essential modifications. This is particularly true for older people, who point out considerable climate differences compared to their childhood and youth.

In general, populations point out drastic increases in average temperatures, changes in rainy periods, and, therefore, changes in dry and rainy seasons, as well as increasing water scarcity, all of which become concerns for communities. In addition, in the coastal communities of Honduras, there are essential changes in the coastline and an increase in the frequency and intensity of the wave surge phenomenon.

In general, every community we spoke with expressed concern and anguish over the changes in their local climate. They were also interested in learning more about the subject, as they believe that access to information and knowledge helps them better understand the climatic situations they are facing.

Although changes are perceived in all communities, the challenges experienced by the women of Barranca are exacerbated due to mining activity. They claim that “although climate change is a global phenomenon, what is experienced here is worse” (woman from the community of Barranca, 2024).

"Walking about 15km beyond the river, you will find that it's still forested, tropical. The humidity in the environment, the trees, and the soil are different; that's how it was here. Now we are in an arid zone."

- A woman from the community of Barrancas, 2023.

On this issue, all the communities consulted agree that extractive activities in their territory exacerbate conditions of vulnerability, making the effects of climate change worse and putting people at a greater risk of suffering loss and damage. They also agree that, although this is a global phenomenon, human actions increase it locally, particularly indiscriminate deforestation and burning in rivers and areas near community water sources.

## Climate Loss and Damage: Experiences from Communities

"Loss and damage means reaching the limits of what we can change. It's what's left of the failure to act fast enough with mitigation and adaptation."

- Nepal Climate Change Expert, 2024.

"Damage' means something that was damaged but can be renewed. 'Loss' means 'definitely'. If we lose a beach space, we can't recover it.

If we lose a species due to pollution, recovering it won't be easy. Damage is what can be restored. For example, if the mangrove is damaged due to deforestation, we can restore it with reforestation."

- A man from the community of El Venado, 2024.

As with climate change, the people of the five communities consulted understood the difference between loss and damage within the climate context.

They could link the categories to their own and local experiences. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that the categorization model of loss and damage has cultural relevance for the communities we worked with and that the participatory process allowed us to problematize and expand its meaning in and from their community realities.

It is also important to note that, for many of the participants, the difference between loss and damage lies not only in the magnitude of the climate phenomenon but also in the context with which they are facing. In other words, people are aware of the difference that the adaptive capacity of the community makes in whether the consequences of climate impacts generate damage or loss since, for a significant part of the people consulted, "damage is the first step to loss" (woman from the community of Barrancas, 2023).

## Analysis of Overall Loss and Damage to All Communities

A classification of the communities visited was developed to precisely analyze the dimensions of their loss and damage. The categories work according to the type of impact and its characteristics.

For the characterization of the type of impact, a classification by time is proposed to divide short-term events (emergencies), such as a hurricane or landslide, or long-term events, such as water source acidification and sea warming. In addition, the classification includes the possibility of quantifying loss and/or damage, i.e., whether what is reported can be quantified totally, partially, or is unquantifiable, and impact categorization on materials, i.e., physical (such as loss of species) or immaterial phenomena (such as the loss of cultural practices).

With regard to these categories, it is important to specify some results. In general, the communities report many events that occur in the short and long term; however, it is noted that the largest number of reports obtained were of the second category: long term. Facing the acceleration of climate breakdown, this difference can be taken as evidence that rural communities in Latin America register with greater intensity the acceleration of changes in the climate and their effects on local ecosystems.

In addition, half of the reports received are on non-quantifiable impacts, which shows the need to explore and introduce complementary categories to the classic binomial to make community and cultural loss and damage visible. Moreover, when inquiring about the quantification of loss and damage, the answers obtained show that it is a category that allows people to express the dimension of the impact experienced clearly.

This classification proposal counters the historical binomial of economic and non-economic loss and damage. The main objective is to broaden the analysis spectrum of this phenomenon beyond the economic dimension; from an anti-capitalist point of view, it is related to proposing broader categories that make it possible to highlight the diversity of negative impacts of the climate crisis in the territories visited.

In addition to the classification by type of impact, a categorization according to the impact characteristics is proposed, which includes community, infrastructure, environmental, and health loss and damage. Community loss and damage comprise the social impacts, such as the loss of customs, social spaces, languages, recipes, and the like. Environmental loss and damage include impacts on natural areas or beings like self-subsistence spaces such as plantations or animals for consumption, conservation areas, or natural resources such as forests or rivers.

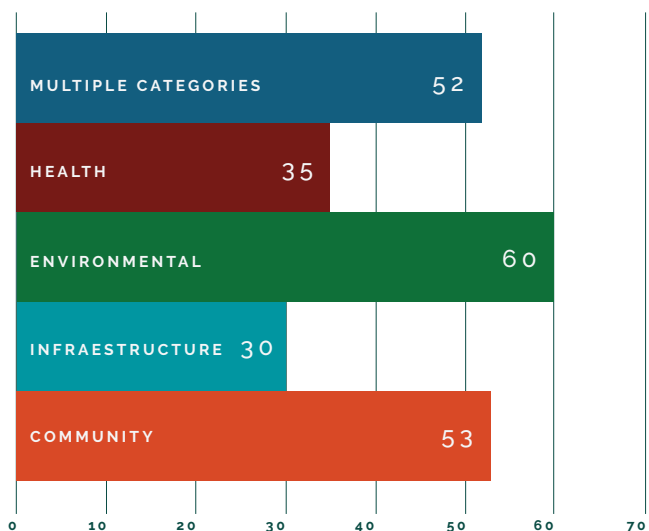
Health loss and damage contain all those that have negative effects on the physical, mental, or social integrity of members or the whole community. Finally, infrastructure loss and damage comprise impacts on public or private property in physical areas, such as roads, homes, and equipment in hospitals and schools, among others.

It should be noted that the phenomenon of loss and damage is multidimensional and complex. In this sense, the categories that are used to refer to this phenomenon cannot be based on restrictive logic; they are categories that overlap and are linked with each other within a cultural framework. The application of the categorization model in the territories proved that it is useful and culturally relevant. In all the communities visited, the populations associated with specific examples allow us to measure the impacts of the climate crisis on the territories.

This finding is evidenced by the analysis of the reports generated, specifically the results obtained by the type of affectation and the emotions associated with the explained loss and damage.

In total, the remote and field activities generated 78 reports of loss and/or damage associated with climate change. It is possible to affirm from the results represented in Figure 1 that most of the reports received are associated with the environmental (77%) and community (68%) categories, as well as a large part of the same reported damages and/or losses are related to multiple categories (67%). This result shows that, for the communities consulted, the loss and damage particularly affect ecosystems, livelihoods, and the local community structure. As well as the importance of multi-categorization to adequately measure the impacts generated by the climate crisis.

Figure 1. Amount of damage or loss reported by type of impact and category type



Source: La Ruta del Clima(2024).

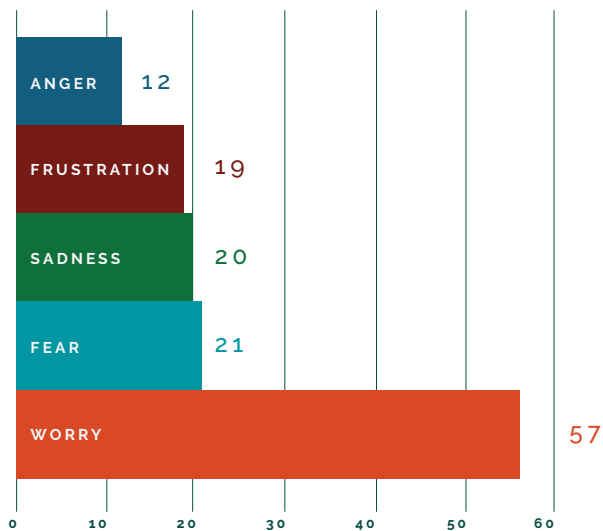
In the environmental category, reported loss and damage are mainly focused on the impact of climate changes on livelihoods and ecosystem services, such as crops and water sources, both of which are the basis for communities' self-subsistence. Significant losses of species are also reported, especially those that provide some direct benefit, such as fish species for local consumption or flora for medical uses.

Infrastructure loss and damage are associated with extreme or short-term climate events, which damage homes, community property, health centers, and schools. As a consequence, access to basic services such as water, electricity, and the internet is also lost.

The community reports incorporate physical and mental health impacts. Regarding physical health, the increase in respiratory diseases, heat stroke, and hunger derived from the setback of food sovereignty generated by the loss of soil productivity stands out.

In addition, it is important to highlight that one of the most relevant issues pointed out by the communities consulted is the consequences of climate change on mental health. This result is clearly evidenced when analyzing the emotions reported in relation to the loss and damage explained. As can be seen in Figure 2, the most reported emotion was worry (73%), followed by fear (27%) and sadness (27%).

Figure 2. Number of reports received according to the type of emotion associated with the damage or loss mentioned







Source: La Ruta del Clima(2024).





Finally, the impacts associated with the community category are diverse and depend on the local context. In Honduras, the worsening of the migration crisis and the increase in sexual violence against girls and adolescents stand out; in Colombia, the loss of rivers as community spaces for the maintenance of the social structure is highlighted.

In this way, it was possible to observe from the systematized reports that there are general and specific effects on all communities. The systematization of these loss and damage in the communities, according to the categories by type of impact, is detailed in Table 1 below:





Table 1: Loss and damage related to climate change by community

General Loss and damage	
	<p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased migration and forced displacement, especially of families dependent on activities such as fishing and subsistence farming</li> <li>• Loss of artisanal fishing as a community and family practice</li> <li>• Loss of rivers as spaces for community-building activities, clean-up activities such as washing clothes and food, and recreation and spiritual significance (especially for women)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Environmental</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drastic changes in temperature and water cycles, seasons, and flowering cycles of local fauna</li> <li>• Water scarcity</li> <li>• Changes in rivers, droughts, lower flows, and increased erosion of rivers</li> <li>• Death of domestic animals (chickens, pigs, and cows) due to heat strokes</li> <li>• Loss of local species due to changes in climate, especially in water ecosystems</li> <li>• Massive crop loss due to seasonal changes and extreme weather events</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of wells and water collection for self-sufficiency</li> <li>• Disasters have an impact on homes, mostly when strong wind gusts in storms blow roofs off</li> <li>• During storms and similar phenomena, the most remote communities with worse roads are cut off from communication</li> <li>• Extreme weather events impact access to services due to damage to infrastructure, access to water (if there are damaged pipelines), energy and internet (if there are damaged power lines), and mobility when roads are damaged</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in respiratory illnesses due to drastic changes in temperature and humidity</li> <li>• Heat stroke causes fainting and particularly affects people with high blood pressure, the elderly, and minors. Communities report sudden heart attacks due to heat.</li> <li>• The economic impacts generated by crop losses produce severe impacts on the mental health of producers, but communities also state that there have been multiple cases of heart attacks related to crop loss due to extreme weather events</li> <li>• Increased hunger as a result of the loss of food sovereignty because changes in climate impact the capacity for self-consumption by fishing and local planting</li> <li>• Increased skin diseases, blemishes, burns, and cancer</li> </ul>

## Honduras

	<p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The migration crisis generates an increase in sexual violence against girls and adolescents, which is evidenced by the increase in inappropriate relationships and child and adolescent pregnancy</li> <li>• Loss of catfish soup due to loss of the species</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Environmental</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of marine species: Titi shrimp, grouper, oysters, croaker, and udder snail</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of tourism infrastructure, especially hotels and restaurants located on the coast</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hunger due to the scarcity of fish resources</li> </ul>

## Colombia

	<p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Barrancas, the loss of the river as a space for chattering and moon bathing (important community activities for the social structure and the maintenance of oral memory and the transmission of knowledge among women) is reported</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Environmental</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Urumita, it is reported that the frost phenomenon generates massive loss of coffee and self-consumption crops</li> <li>• In Urumita, the loss of two local fruits, grapefruit and mortin, is reported. In addition, there is a decrease in the frequency of species such as the pirulera guava, bocachico fish, morrocuci, iguana and agouti are observed much less frequently. And there is a decrease in urban flora due to water scarcity</li> <li>• In Barrancas, the loss of trees is reported: cariacorn, milk mamón, guaymaro, joba (fruit tree), cinchona (medicinal tree), guaiaco, gabilana, contragabilana (last three ancestral and medicinal plants), chicory</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of “jaguey” (holes in the ground to collect and maintain water for livestock) is lost</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In both Barrancas and Urumita, it is reported that the peasant population experiences severe mental health problems, especially anxiety, depression, and sudden heart attacks associated with debts acquired for agricultural production, especially when crops are lost due to extreme weather phenomena or seasonal changes</li> </ul>

Source: La Ruta del Clima(2024).

The massive loss of species, the setback in water and food sovereignty, as well as the harmful impacts on health, stand out among the general impacts on all communities.

"We went to the 'ñanga' and found nothing. There was nothing to support the family [...] we went to the 'ñanga' and found everything dead. The 'ñanga' smelled like pure death. All the curil died; all the crustaceans died. No one knew why, but many said it was because of the rain."

- Man from the community of El Venado, 2023.

Regarding the massive loss of species, the Colombian communities of Barrancas and especially Urumita highlight how drastic changes in climate, especially changes in rain cycles, have had an impact on the flowering cycles of local crops, resulting in fruits of lower quality, size, and flavor. This situation increases when there are drastic changes in temperature, which can cause total losses in crops such as vegetables that are highly sensitive to temperature and relative humidity.

The massive loss of species then generates setbacks in the food sovereignty of the communities as it produces the loss of crops for self-subsistence and the loss of arable soils:

"The land loses productivity because the cycles are not closed; microorganisms die because of drastic changes."

- Woman from the community of Urumita, 2023.

Regarding the loss of food security, Honduran coastal communities report the loss of the soil's capacity to cultivate and keep domestic animals, resulting from:

"You could grow corn or watermelon here; you could reap what you sowed [...] And today it's no longer possible. Look, I have a little piece of land here, and it's not even suitable for cattle [...] This land is sand; you can dig and dig, and you're never going to find stone, only sand [...] The land is no longer producing as many crops as it used to."

- Man from the community of El Venado, 2023.

The peasants of Urumita particularly highlight the impact of changes in temperature and humidity on coffee cultivation as the main generator of income because "when the rain changes, flowering is delayed [...], because, when there is little rain, the coffee beans turn small and vaneados. It dries out and does not ripen, or the ripening is not uniform" (woman from Urumita, 2023).

In addition, when there is heavy rain, fruits are deformed, and even ripe fruits fall, resulting in a loss of crops.

In addition, frosts (a phenomenon reported by the women coffee growers of Urumita caused by drastic changes in atmospheric pressure) cause clouds to descend on the crops and freeze them, generating massive losses, especially in coffee, as can be seen in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Impacts of the Urumita frosts on local coffee crops



Source: La Ruta del Clima(2023).

"Sometimes everything is lost, and the loss is for everybody."

- Woman of the community of Urumita, 2023

Urumita coffee growers say that climate change's impacts on coffee productivity are a severe problem for the local economy. Changes in rainfall alter the flowering period, causing uneven ripening and making it difficult to plan and execute the grain harvest and its respective sale. This generates massive losses to the local coffee sector: "We used to collect 100kg; now we collect 70kg or 50kg. Ten coffee pickers were needed; now only 2 or 3 are necessary", man from Urumita, 2023.

"This year, people didn't dare to plant."

- Woman of the community of Urumita, 2023.

Farmers are facing losses derived from seasonal changes or extreme weather events, magnified by two phenomena: the loss of livelihoods and the worsening of indebtedness.

Most local farmers depend on credit for their work, especially the initial investment of the harvest. Due to the lack of bank and agricultural insurance for crop losses, in case of extreme events or seasonal changes, farmers assume losses.

This situation has led to significant increases in farmers' mental health, including suicides, and the fear of sowing and losing money has led farmers to decide not to harvest at all.

"Losing is like when I had the good water in the well, then it salted. That's a loss to me because I needed that water [...] it salted when there was a wave surge five years ago."  
- Woman from the community of Cedeño, 2023.

All the communities visited report the loss of local water sovereignty. They state that, in previous decades, communities were supplied with water through local wells and rainwater harvesting.

These practices are currently unfeasible because of the salinization of wells caused by wave surges in Honduras and droughts of rivers and wells in Colombia. This means that communities depend on the purchase of water to meet their basic consumption needs.

"I was going to the sea very calmly and, suddenly, a very big wave was coming [...] It goes under the wave, lifts the house, and pulls it deep into the sea. I fainted because I had never seen that. It was the first time I had that experience, and, from there, I continued, and it was normal, I looked and not anymore. Psychologically, I had gotten used to it, and then I looked at the destruction and the hotels."  
- Woman from the community of Cedeño, 2023.

In all five communities, drastic changes in climate have had impacts on the health of the local population.

In physical health, an increase in colds, flu, and heat strokes that particularly affect people with high blood pressure, liver diseases, the elderly, minors, and pregnant women has been identified.

"Look, it can rain at night in here, and it dawns as if no rain has fallen, as if fire came out of the earth. It affects me too because so many people are suffering from high blood pressure because of the heat."  
- Woman from the community of 3 de Febrero.

Along with the above, communities also manifest significant damage to mental and emotional health as a result of observing and noticing the loss of species (in connection with the loss of cultural or spiritual practices derived from the scarcity of natural resources, such as the decline of species or drought of rivers), but, mainly, worry, anxiety, and anguish due to the loss of crops and infrastructure.

## Not Being Able to Fish, Harvest, Invest in Infrastructure: The Loss and damage of Coastal Communities in the Gulf of Fonseca

“Right now, due to climate change, fishing is declining. There’s no fishing.”  
- Woman from the community of 3 de Febrero.

When talking to the coastal communities of the Gulf of Fonseca, the main losses highlighted by the locals are the impossibility of making a living from fishing and the land and ensuring livelihoods such as the development of private and community infrastructure to continue living in dignity.

The main loss reported by the communities is the fishing resource (the loss of marine species such as mollusks, curiles, and crustaceans) as well as the impact on the size and quality of the product. This phenomenon generates severe impacts on the local economy and livelihoods, since families depend directly on the economic resources derived from fishing activity.

“Because of the heat, the fish go out to sea, the fish go offshore. Fish can no longer withstand the heat here and have gone to deeper waters, where perhaps fishing boats can’t go there.”  
- Woman from the community of 3 de Febrero.

It results not only in an environmental loss but in multiple categories since it also implies the loss of artisanal fishing as a community practice, causing the new generations not to acquire the knowledge or be able to make a living from fishing as “for those who live from fishing, it is difficult to change their job; it is difficult to change livelihoods” (clerk of the Municipality of Marcovia, 2024). This means that many fishermen and their families may be forced to migrate. In addition, the impact of community and cultural losses is highlighted since, due to the loss of artisanal fishing, traditional dishes and customs associated with it are lost.

Another derived problem is the increase in transboundary conflicts. When fish in national waters decrease, and fishermen cross transboundary waters due to the need to survive, they are exposed to being detained with severe consequences such as the loss of their work equipment and fines. Therefore, it is possible to observe that the impact on the fishing resource, more than just an environmental loss, is mostly community-based and has an integral impact on the local economy and livelihoods.

“The sea is reaching where the relocation process was done (Boca Ratón).”  
- Clerk of the Municipality of Marcovia, 2024.

Another widely reported negative impact in Honduras is the increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as rain, heat, and, above all, wave surges, events that can be caused by drastic increases in water levels derived from the presence of a storm or by strong winds derived from a hurricane or tropical storm (National Hurricane Center).<sup>4</sup> Wave surges cause the water from the coast to invade dry land with great force. In the specific case of the Honduran coasts of the Gulf of Fonseca, according to local experts, this phenomenon is associated with local geological characteristics added to strong sea currents.

“What they tell me is that, before, witnessing a wave surge was a phenomenon that occurred every 5, 8, 10 years. Nowadays, the wave surge phenomenon is recurrent every year, even more than twice a year.”  
- Clerk of the Municipality of Marcovia, 2024.

The populations of the three communities consulted affirm that, although wave surges are phenomena that have always existed, particularly in March near Easter, there has been an increase in the frequency and intensity of this in recent decades, which generates severe impacts on the communities.

With the increase in wave surges, the territory has undergone modifications in the landscape due to changes in the coastline resulting from the erosion caused by the sea’s entry. Wave surges have also led to infrastructure losses. This includes the loss of homes, businesses, and community spaces (such as educational and health centers) that serve a dual community purpose as shelters in emergency situations.

Although the wave surges affect the entire Honduran coastline of the Gulf of Fonseca, their impacts are not homogeneous: they affect the communities of Cedeño with greater intensity compared to Venado and 3 de Febrero communities. According to locals, the difference resides in the mangrove line that the last two communities maintain through reforestation work, which protects them from the increase in frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. This highlights the importance of community action in building adaptive capacity.

<sup>4</sup> National Hurricane Center. Storm Surge Unit. National Weather Service. What is Storm Surge? [https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/surge/marejadaCiclonica\\_intro.pdf](https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/surge/marejadaCiclonica_intro.pdf)

"The sea has eaten four streets; it was a great depth. The beach was huge; now we have it on the shore. Cedeño was beautiful, with the best restaurants and the best hotels. Now there's none of that."

- Woman of the Cedeño community, 2024

However, for the population consulted (particularly from the community of Cedeño), the greatest impact is the loss of tourism as an income-generating activity, derived from the massive loss of infrastructure associated with the increase in the phenomenon. Due to wave surges, local families lost their hotels, restaurants, and even their homes, and "people got tired of losing, losing, and losing" (clerk of the Municipality of Marcovia, 2024).

The worsening of the phenomenon and the absence of comprehensive solutions make it impossible to relocate community infrastructure. According to local authorities, a process of relocation was carried out to one of the communities of the most at-risk regions on the coastline. Still, the process failed because "not a single family that was relocated could adapt" (clerk of the Municipality of Marcovia, 2024). The family's economy depended on the sea, and the resettlement territory did not allow them to maintain their livelihoods. Thus, drastic changes in the climate mean that both authorities and local families do not invest in the development of local infrastructure, exacerbating existing conditions of vulnerability.

"Hurricane Mitch was in 1998. Entire communities were lost; I remember a community called El Chaparro, and not even a house remained."

- Man from the community of EL Venado, 2024.

For the coastal communities of the Gulf of Fonseca, these experiences are part of a long survival from extreme weather events, particularly hurricanes. The populations remember how, as a result of Hurricane Mitch, many families and communities had to leave their territories because they were considered risk regions and rebuild their lives on the mainland, only to see the increase in wave surges and hurricanes in their new home decades later. According to local authorities, this problem is difficult because the region does not receive the same humanitarian support as the northern region of the country, where tourism activity is stronger. However, the impacts on the municipality may be equal or greater.

In this scenario, communities and local authorities are facing the consequences of drastic climate changes as multiplier effects that exacerbate problems that already exist in the territory. These include indirect losses, such as the increase in child marriage and sexual violence, as

well as migration and forced displacement because of the impact of the loss of local livelihoods on the social and community structure.

"The issue of migration here is very notorious. Entire families have left. There was a year when the wave surge happened, and then taking children was like a guarantee that parents could get to the United States [...] There are entire families here that have left because they made a living from fishing or selling on the homestead and somewhat limited employment sources."

- Clerk of the Municipality of Marcovia, 2024

For local communities, the significant increase in girls leaving home to start common-law relationships, many in improper relationships, as well as the increase in child pregnancy (in children under 11-13 years of age) is notorious. These problems are directly associated with the massive migration of heads of households, leaving minors in the care of local relatives.

Regarding migration and displacement, the population and authorities emphasize that it is the result of the absence of decent job opportunities and the worsening of conditions of social, economic, and particularly environmental vulnerability due to the loss of productivity of the soil and the sea. This has exacerbated the historical phenomenon of significant migration of people from the community to the United States in search of better opportunities: "On average, between 20 and 30 people leave per month" (clerk of the Municipality of Marcovia, 2024).

## People Are Afraid to Sow: Loss and Damage of Peasant Communities in La Guajira

For the communities of Barrancas and Urumita, located in La Guajira, Colombia, the main local loss is the fear of sowing and losing everything, derived from the uncertainty of climate changes, periodicity of rainfall, and their impacts on the regeneration cycles of soil microorganisms. Consequently, there is an impact of climate changes on local biodiversity, the loss of species of flora and fauna, and the drought of rivers that led to the loss of fishing as a local practice.

“This was a fishing village [...] but that culture was lost because the rivers dried up.”  
- Woman of the community of Urumita, 2023.

For the community of Barrancas, the loss of productivity derived from changes in the climate and the pollution of local ecosystems generated the loss of ancestral foods like Chiqui-chiqui, a traditional sweet made from cariacó corn that is no longer available. The loss of traditional medicine is also highlighted as a community, health, and environmental loss: “With the loss of the ability to cultivate, traditional medicine was lost” because “there are many plants that have disappeared [...] 80% of the medicinal plants are no longer there” (woman from the community of Barranca, 2023). Thus, generating the loss of ancestral and community practices and knowledge, and even practices of self-subsistence and healing of spiritual relevance for the Afro-peasant people of La Guajira.

“One of the youth’s main activities was to go to the streams.”  
- Woman from the community of Barrancas, 2023.

The communities also highlight the worsening of water scarcity as a result of the drought of local rivers. This has led to the loss of community spaces, especially for children, youth, and women, which is accompanied by significant losses of cultural practices, such as the la mojada games before Easter in Urumita or the moon baths and chattering for women in Barrancas.

“It dried up completely to the point that we started to relocate the fish so that they wouldn’t die, and they did,”  
- Woman from the community of Barrancas, 2023.

It also has an impact on the development of daily activities, such as food preparation or household cleaning tasks, which particularly affect women. Women experience a historical and disproportionate surcharge of unpaid domestic and care work, as well as differentiated hygiene needs mainly associated with menstruation. This is especially true in communities without aqueducts, where collecting and managing water has been a historic task for women.

“They are starving because the grass is no longer growing; there is no food.”  
- Woman from the community of Barrancas, 2023.

In addition, the phenomenon affects the development of agricultural activities for income generation, self-subsistence, and food security since, due to water scarcity, communities report the death of animals due to dehydration (fish in local rivers, wildlife, and domestic animals) and the desperation of not being able to sow because local sources of water are not enough to maintain crops.



Therefore, observation, identification, and registration actions are crucial to generating awareness about phenomena that could otherwise be normalized due to the lack of information, the systematic violation of human rights in local contexts, and the lack of comprehensive attention to them. They allow us to recognize not only the dimension of the impact but also the adaptive capacity of communities.

In addition, the application of the proposed categories, as a first draft to the classic binomial, shows that the classification of economic and non-economic loss and damage is insufficient to measure the reality of the climate crisis's impact on Latin American communities. Therefore, there is a need to continue expanding these categories from an anti-capitalist epistemological vision and the global south.

### **The relationship with the territory marks the adaptive capacity of the community**

The visits to the different communities and the contrast between their contexts, problems, and resistance strategies made it visible that vulnerability, as the probability that a threat will generate loss and damage derived from risk, is marked by local adaptive capacity. Thus, the communities with a more robust and narrower community fabric, greater economic autonomy, more fabulous food and water sovereignty, have the most significant capacity to resist climate changes while maintaining minimum human rights standards.

And that one of the central axes that marks these capacities is the relationship that the community and the people have with their territory. Although there are technical differences between the vulnerabilities derived from state abandonment or systematic violation of human rights and the vulnerabilities derived from changes in the climate, in the reality of the communities visited, this difference is indivisible. This is particularly evident in the communities that survive and resist the presence of extractive activities in their territory since the ecocide derived from extractive activities is the most excellent enhancer of climate vulnerability observed in the field.

### **Relationship with the territory from the perspective of gender**

Just as the relationship with the territory marks the adaptive capacity of communities and, therefore, their capacity to resist and survive conditions of vulnerability, gender also marks the relationship of populations with their territory.

Figure 10. Women's Climate Dialogues



Source: Authors, Urumita Climate Dialogue, 2024.

Meanwhile, in Honduras, there was a marked gender difference in managing communal goods, men and fisheries, women and water, curl, mangroves, fire, tortillas, care, and food. In Colombia, the strong leadership of peasant women is critical to their resistance, in Barrancas to the mining enclave, dispossession, and pollution, and in Urumita to droughts, changes in crop productivity, and access to water for the community.

Even in communities with solid male leadership in local dialogue spaces, key women were always identified for caring for ecosystems and the community fabric. The importance of men's commitment to the community in issues of gender equality, women's empowerment, prevention, attention to, and denunciation of sexual violence is highlighted, which in the communities visited evidenced a marked difference in the participation of local women in community spaces.

In general, women's participation in local and remote dialogue spaces and processes for reporting loss and damage was higher, which was a key feature of the initiatives' success.

## The desire for knowledge for local climate empowerment and action

“Well, this year, the simple reality is that it’s been like summer. Because of the heat, there has been heat this whole year, I don’t know why. Maybe it’s because there hasn’t been much rain because it rained a lot before.”  
- A woman from the community of Cedeño, 2023.

In their immediate reality, all local communities indicated that there are evident and drastic changes in the local climate and associate them with impacts on water cycles, patterns, and temperature.

Populations show an important interest and motivation to learn about climate change, its causes, and consequences; “It gives us language” (Woman from the community of Cedeño, 2024). They express significant interest in observation, monitoring, and reporting as they find a way to process their reality and contribute to climate action.

Figure 11. Women from Urumita and Barrancas reporting loss and damage



Source: Authors, Urumita and Barrancas Climate Dialogue, 2024.

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