

Community insights on the humanitarian impact of climate change – Argentina

Summary of key findings

Key current political and economic context in Argentina

- Foreign debt: Dependence on International Monetary Fund.
- 3-digit interannual inflation for 3rd consecutive year.
- Decline in real value of wages and high inflation.
- Increase in unemployment and underemployment.
- Polarised political context: climate change is politicized.

Key issues regarding the climate agenda in Argentina:

Climate change is not a priority in the public agenda in Argentina. In general, Argentinians do not consider climate change as a priority in their daily lives¹, it is perceived as a scientific and political issue. Climate change becomes an issue discussed only when a disaster or emergency occurs. However, there are a few national plans and policies² in which the current administration (ending December 10th) sets goals and priorities to reduce climate change impact in the coming years.

Key economic figures

Population: **46,044,703** inhabitants.
Poverty rate: **40.1%**
Population in public assistance: **51%**.
Interannual inflation: **142.7% (Oct-23)**

Official climate change impact forecast for Argentina Plan Nacional de Lucha contra el Cambio Climático 2022

- Potential water crisis
- Glacial retreat
- Water stress due to increased temperatures
- High frequency of extreme rainfall and flooding
- Reduction of the average flows of the rivers of the Plata Basin
- Sea level rise

Focus groups and interviews cited here were conducted in urban areas in Neuquen and Corrientes provinces.

In June 2023, heavy rains caused flash flooding in the Neuquen province, affecting an estimated 4,000 families. The flooding caused power outages, road closures and contamination of water supplies—prompting the local authorities to request the support of the Argentine Red Cross.

Heavy rain and flooding submerge the province of Corrientes, Argentina, on Nov. 6, 2023. Many of the river islands in the region were completely swallowed and thousands of people were affected.

It's important to point out that, while conducting the study, the two candidates running for national president in the second round took the issue of climate change as a point of political debate with opposing positions.

¹ Conclusions of the Evidence- Based Unified Planning Process 2024

² National Climate Change Action Plan, National Plan for Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change by 2030 and National Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction of the Argentine Republic

Key highlights from community insights – November 2023.

Disclaimer: These **preliminary findings** are based on data collected in November 2023 in two branches of Argentine Red Cross (Corrientes and Neuquén). Data from the remaining four selected branches will undergo further processing during December.

Climate change is not on the public agenda: people don't yet understand the long-term impacts of the climate crisis.

Limited access to timely and useful information on climate change has a significant impact on the communities consulted, as it hinders their ability to prepare for and adapt to related disasters and interferes with building community resilience as well as the articulation with risk management systems (both official and community-based). The following aspects particularly need to be addressed:

- **Build community awareness:** Participants highlighted the necessity of establishing awareness programs that explain climate change and its impacts in daily life, in a way that is accessible to different population and age groups, as there is limited understanding and familiarity with and interest in the concept.
- **Strengthening the capabilities of local organisations:** Community based organisations request information and training on disaster management and coordination mechanisms with official risk management and emergency systems, as they report they are reacting to recent climate events in an intuitive manner and without a no-harm approach.
- **Early warning systems, both official and community-based, should be operational:** Participants have emphasized the absence or inefficiency of timely and clear alert or early warning mechanism adapted to local communication channels, which could prevent and transform emergency scenarios.
- **Post-emergency recovery-effects information:** A demand for post-emergency mental health information was detected. However, the lack of mentions of post-emergency economic and social recovery could be a result of the lack of knowledge of climate change and its direct effects on family economy.

“When the last floods happened, we started from scratch, without knowing. We were trying to organize in the best way, intuitively.” **Neuquén Focus Group – Nov 2023**

Communities and responders need to be more prepared, with stronger early warning systems adapted to different contexts.

The need to strengthen disaster management mechanisms and link them directly to climate change was a cross-cutting idea among participants.

- Disaster management and its response measures **do not function effectively**, and some territories do not have such services at all.
- This results in a **lack of community trust in disaster management capacities of local authorities** and hinders the engagement of communities in disaster risk reduction related to climate change.
- In addition, **climate change impact perception is focused on response to disasters** with no mentions of planning, mitigation, reduction, and recovery measures.

"(...) the media tried to tell us that there was going to be a rise in the river's flow, but we couldn't understand what needed to be done (...) There was a lack of information to be able to gauge what was going to happen. (...)"

Neuquén Focus Group – Nov 2023

Severe environmental events connected to climate change transform the landscape and affect livelihoods.

- According to participants, the **floods not only affected local agriculture and livestock** production and its value chain, but also the **material assets** of local families as their houses and personal effects. The socioeconomic situation is extremely difficult, therefore the impact of climate change on livelihoods is seen as an added challenge to an already challenging situation.
- Despite that the severe drought resulting from the **La Niña phenomenon affected Argentina's food production, decreasing year-on-year agricultural output by -33.8%**³ compared with 2022, this fact was not mentioned in any of the focus groups.

"(...) We lived through it, we lost everything, my dad had animals and the river carried everything away. We were left with nothing; we were left with our house on a hill and then we would lose everything and start all over again. (...)"

Neuquén Focus Group – Nov 2023

³ National Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, 2023