



PROCOEES: Project for the Creation of Economic Opportunities and Sustainable Entrepreneurship in Guatemala - LASC *

The Western Highlands is a region that is among the poorest and most rural in Guatemala. The departments of Quetzaltenango, Quiché, San Marcos, Totonicapán and Huehuetenango, which are part of the Western Highlands of Guatemala, where the PROCOEES Project intervenes in its phases I and II, is the region with low and medium human development indicators and with high rates of unemployment and poverty. This has an impact on the lack of economic opportunities for people in this region and is the major common cause of mass migration from Guatemala due to extreme poverty and little or lack of employment, mainly of people from rural areas who do not live near large cities.

Guatemala remains the most rural country in Central America and one of the youngest and poorest. Nationally, 51% of Guatemalans live in urban areas and 49% in rural areas. Related to this, one-third of all Guatemalans depend on agriculture as their main source of income. Guatemala is the fifth poorest country in Latin America and the Caribbean. People with this economic crisis of poverty and lack of access to employment, migrate irregularly to another place or country, and as a potential destination the United States, in search of better economic and personal development and improved income.

In Guatemala, between 2013 and 2021, Helvetas empowered 27,618 smallholder farmers -64% women (mostly indigenous)- boosting incomes by 304% and sales by 25% through PRODERT. Since 2022, Helvetas' PROCOEES project has linked 6,425 people to jobs or income, created 957 ventures, and increased farmer income by up to 55%.

In Guatemala's Western Highlands, poverty and lack of jobs drive migration. Nearly half of the population lives in rural areas, with one-third relying on agriculture. Helvetas' PROCOEES project creates jobs and income by helping rural entrepreneurs -especially women and youth- launch small businesses and join networks linked to cooperatives like COIPAL. These networks expand market access, boost production, and create sustainable employment. With a 12-year track record, PROCOEES helps build dignified livelihoods and reduces the pressure to migrate. The project promotes inclusive economic development by strengthening local business ecosystems, enhancing technical skills, and connecting producers to viable markets, while fostering collaboration among families, cooperatives, and local leaders.

Support from Light a Single Candle Foundation will scale these efforts in three rural communities of Quetzaltenango: El Eden, El Carmen, and Buena Vista, between 2025 and 2027.

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE

Women and young people prone to emigrate and returned migrants have access to income and decent employment through a strong network of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, which contributes to reducing forced migration in Guatemala.

PARTICIPANTS IMPACTED

The project will support rural families in Palestina de Los Altos who rely on small-scale farming with low income due to traditional crops, low yields, and unstable markets. The participants include multi-generational households -parents, children, and grandparents- who depend on farming. PROCOEES will help them diversify crops, access better markets, and develop income-generating activities. Special focus will be placed on empowering women and youth in these multi-generational households.

With the support of:



HELVETAS

*** Pending Donor Approval**

PROJECT OUTCOMES

1. By the end of Year 2 (2027), 230 new agricultural enterprises will be established by participating in smallholder farmers -100 in peas, 100 in broccoli, and 30 in greenhouse tomatoes- leading to an average 20% increase in production and income among these producers.
2. By the end of Year 1 (2026), 75 tomato-producing families who are members of the COIPAL cooperative will have successfully transformed their tomatoes into a value-added product -commercially branded and registered tomato sauce- resulting in an average 20% increase in household income.
3. By the end of Year 2 (2027), 85% of participating households (260 families) will have completed training in financial education and gender equity and demonstrate improved knowledge and application of these principles in managing income and making household decisions.
4. By the end of Year 1 (2026), 100% of community leaders in the three target communities will be trained in leadership, community organizing, and local governance, enabling stronger participation in project planning, accountability, and sustainability.

PROJECT GOALS

Overarching Goals (2025-2027)

1. By 2027, 305 rural families in El Eden, El Carmen, and Buena Vista increased household income by at least 20% through agricultural entrepreneurship and improved market access, reducing pressure to migrate.
2. By 2027, 100% of participating smallholder farmers (1525) adopt one or more high-demand crops (peas, broccoli, tomatoes under greenhouse conditions) and increase production by 20% through use of improved inputs and practices.
3. By 2027, 85% of participating households (260) demonstrate enhanced knowledge in financial literacy, gender equity, and leadership, contributing to more resilient and inclusive communities.

VALUE CHAINS

1. Peas;
2. Broccoli;
3. Tomatoes;

INTERVENTION AREAS

Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs): Improving the competitiveness of COIPAL cooperative. The strengthening of COIPAL will focus on its modernization and transformation towards innovation and their access to new national, regional and international markets. The COIPAL cooperative will have successfully transformed their tomatoes into a value-added product -commercially branded and registered tomato sauce- resulting in an average 20% increase in household income. COIPAL will also facilitate the collection and commercialization of peas and broccoli grown by project participants in collaboration with two private export companies.

Promotion of New Agricultural Enterprises: Dynamic and innovative ventures that respond to market demand. In other words, they will be ventures by opportunity, where the model of "business networks" will be promoted. For the promotion of new ventures, it will be co-investment by the entrepreneur and co-investment of the project.

FAST FACTS

Geographical Location:

Three rural communities across one municipality in the Department of Quetzaltenango, located in the Western Highlands of Guatemala.

Those are communities of El Edén, El Carmen, and Buena Vista within the municipality of Palestina de Los Altos.

Phase and Duration: 1 Phase, 2 years

Start Date: September 01, 2025

End Date: August 31, 2027

Phase Budget: \$ 300,000.00

Main Actors and Partners:

- Several strategic partners will support project implementation. Cooperativa Agrícola COIPAL, based in Palestina de Los Altos, will purchase tomatoes grown by project participants and sell them to local schools, with a portion processed into tomato sauce by the cooperative.
- FairFruit and/or San Juan Agroexport, private export companies, will purchase peas from project participants for export to Europe, Central America, and the U.S. ALCOSA, an agro-industrial firm dedicated to the production, processing, and export of frozen vegetables, will buy broccoli for processing and export.
- INTECAP (Instituto Técnico de Capacitación y Productividad) Will train COIPAL members in tomato sauce production, while a Peace Corps Guatemala volunteer will support technical training and accompany the tomato processing cycle with the cooperative.
- The project will also work closely with local COCODEs (Community Development Councils) and community families, providing support in leadership development, education, skill building, and income generation. Participants selected to implement broccoli and pea plots or manage tomato greenhouses will be democratically chosen in coordination with community leaders, based on poverty levels and land access.
- Communities will also take part in accountability events and help evaluate project progress and achievements.

Donors:

- Light a Single Candle Foundation
- HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (own funds)

With the support of:



More information at:

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Guatemala

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