

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, IN FIVE MUNICIPALITIES OF THE CUILCO RIVER BASIN FOR RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

To achieve sustainable development, it is crucial that Guatemala continues to strengthen its environmental policies, promote international cooperation, and encourage the participation of all sectors of society in environmental protection. Sustainable watershed management is a challenge for Guatemala, and the Cuilco River basin involves coordination among local, national, and international actors to promote the conservation of water resources and the socioeconomic development of its inhabitants.

The Cuilco River Basin is in western Guatemala, whose territory is distributed across the departments of San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, and Totonicapán. It covers an area of 2301 km2, equivalent to 2% of the national territory. Its population density is equivalent to 451 inhabitants per km2, exceeding the national average; this causes a series of negative impacts on the territory in addition to the lack of strategic planning to guide interventions promoting comprehensive land management.

It is a transboundary basin, as the Cuilco River originates in Guatemala and flows into Mexico, where it joins the Grijalva River, one of the main river systems in southeastern Mexico. This basin is characterized by its mountainous geography, with altitudes ranging from 1,500 to over 3,000 meters above sea level, which influences its temperate to cold climate. Its territory is part of the Sierra Madre de Chiapas and features considerable biodiversity, with ecosystems ranging from pine and oak forests to cultivated areas and grasslands.

The Cuilco River is vital for the communities living in the basin, as it provides water for human consumption, agriculture, and livestock. However, it faces various challenges, such as deforestation, soil erosion, pollution, and climate variability, which affect the availability and quality of water. From a socioeconomic perspective, the basin's population is mainly composed of indigenous communities, mostly of Maya-Mam and Maya-Chuj origin, who depend on subsistence agriculture and local trade. In recent years, migration has been a significant phenomenon, with a significant impact on the economy and the use of natural resources.

The **Ecological Transition Program (PROTEC),** of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), seeks to promote the following approaches:

i) Nature-based solutions,
ii) Circular economy and
iii) The fight against drought and desertification, to promote compliance with international environmental agreements.

For Guatemala, these goals and the twenty-four environmental targets set out in the 2030 Agenda are especially relevant. The country faces significant challenges due to its vulnerability to climate change, accelerated deforestation, water source pollution, and biodiversity loss. The adoption of policies and strategies based on these SDGs is crucial to advancing a balance between economic growth, social welfare, and environmental protection.

Funded by: aecid Guatemala

Implemented by: HELVETAS CENTROAMÉRICA

Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

Help mitigate the problems of the Cuilco River basin.

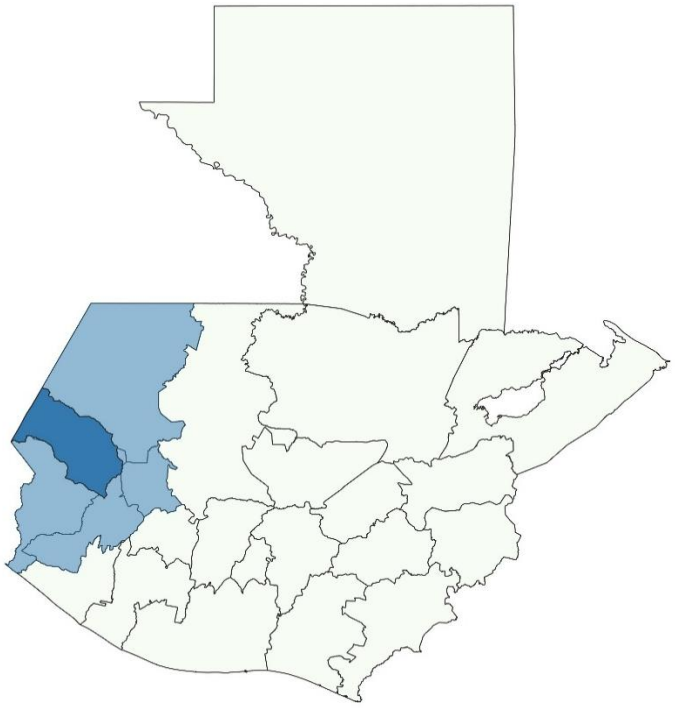
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

Promote sustainable management of natural resources with nature-based solutions and circular economy approaches in the Cuilco River basin for adaptation and mitigation to climate change.

RESULTS

1. Strengthening the management of the Cuilco River basin through planning instruments that contribute to sustainable management.
2. Management of natural resources with a nature-based solutions approach.
3. Strengthening community organizations and municipal agencies responsible for providing water services to contribute to the fulfillment of the human right to water and sanitation.
4. Promotion and/or strengthening of productive enterprises in the social aspect.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Geographical location:

The project's intervention will cover the territory of the Cuilco River basin, which is made up of 30 municipalities from 4 departments, including: San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, and Totonicapán, with direct intervention in 5 municipalities of the department of San Marcos (San Marcos, San José Ojetenam, Sipacapa, San Miguel Ixtahuacan, and Concepción Tutuapa).

Phase and duration: Single phase, 24 months

Start Date: ***January 5, 2026***

Completion date: ***January 5, 2028***

Entities involved:

1. Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources -MARN-
2. National Institute of Forests -INAB-
3. Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food -MAGA-
4. Ministry of Economy -MINECO-
5. Municipalities through their agencies: Forestry Offices, Municipal Water and Sanitation Offices, Municipal Local Economic Development Departments, Municipal Women's Directorates.
6. Technical Table of the Cuilco River Basin
7. Community Development Councils, through the Water and Sanitation Commissions.
8. Entrepreneurship groups.

Donors:

1. Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation - AECID - in Guatemala.

- HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation.

1. Strategic partners and local partners.

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