



## LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF IN LATIN AMERICA YOUTH AND COCOA

Lutheran World Relief recognizes that agriculture is the engine that drives the rural economies of many developing nations and sees its potential to help families break out of the cycle of poverty. With this understanding, we strive to prepare Latin American youth living in rural poverty for viable careers in the cocoa sector.

Young people between the ages of 15 and 24 represent over 40 percent of all unemployed people in Latin America.<sup>1</sup> Rural youth make up a substantial portion of this percentage as their employment opportunities are often low paying and scarce, leading them to believe migration to urban areas or other countries is the only option to provide for themselves and their families. When those opportunities fail to materialize, many rural youth quickly find themselves relegated to the informal sector, where they are more likely to be paid meager wages, face job insecurity and lack protection and rights. While these youth struggle to make ends meet, their home communities struggle without the next generation there to care for aging populations, maintain the family farm and provide essential services.

Latin America produces 15 percent of the world's cocoa,<sup>2</sup> but its industry suffers from the ill-effects of warming temperatures, unpredictable weather, and sub-optimal agricultural and post-harvest handling practices. With global demand for cocoa exceeding supply, there is tremendous opportunity for young people to earn a living in the cocoa sector while working to restore fragile ecosystems devastated by pests and plant diseases, improve agricultural practices and establish cocoa as an engine of inclusive economic growth.

### YOUNG APPRENTICES SHAPE THE FUTURE

Lutheran World Relief creates entry points for youth in the cocoa supply chain by developing their transferable skills as data collectors and service providers. Our programs link youth to the private sector, improving their opportunities to find formalized work. Through our apprenticeship and diploma programs, young people gain certifiable skills in cocoa production and become productive members of the agricultural community.



**Lutheran World Relief**  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. LASTING PROMISE.

<sup>1</sup> ILO, 2016

<sup>2</sup> World Cocoa Foundation, "Cocoa Market Update," April 1, 2014, <http://www.worldcocoafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/Cocoa-Market-Update-as-of-4-1-2014.pdf>

Since 1945, Lutheran World Relief has been successfully tackling poverty in some of the world's hardest-to-reach places. We provide relief in emergencies and help families restore their lives. We partner with communities to build and grow rural economies that are beneficial to the poorest farmer. By investing in people, their skills, and strengthening their ability to adapt, we help them build the resilience they need to thrive.

In Guatemala, we are training young people to become valuable extension agents for fellow farmers and small business entrepreneurs with skills in agri-business management, governance and administration.

In El Salvador, where young people face daily dangers of violent gang activity and intense pressures to migrate due to lack of access to education and high unemployment, Lutheran World Relief launched a diploma program designed to prepare young people to be the next generation of entrepreneurs in the country's burgeoning cocoa industry. The Diploma in Cocoa Management program — offered at the Universidad de Oriente, known locally as UNIVO — integrates training in cocoa cultivation, business management and life skills, like decision making, problem solving and critical thinking. **MORE THAN 100 STUDENTS** have graduated from the program in 2018. Of these, 25% have already found formal employment, and many are marketing their services as technical experts to cocoa cooperatives.

“Through the diploma project, I received help from important actors, such as the UNIVO Entrepreneur Center. They accompanied me in the process of developing a business model that allowed me to earn seed capital to boost my business, which now generates income and allows me to be economically independent. I feel fulfilled with new hopes.” – Beatriz Margarita Villatoro, graduate from the LWR diploma program in El Salvador.



## YOUTH BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

For smallholder farmers in Central America, geographic isolation makes it difficult to learn how to grow quality cacao. With network coverage in rural areas expanding rapidly and the cost of phones and service continuing to decrease, text messaging, mobile internet and cellphone apps are increasingly how rural farmers communicate and obtain information.

As part of our youth training, Lutheran World Relief shows young people how to use a smartphone application we developed that provides farmers access to comprehensive guides on cocoa cultivation, called Cacao Movil (Mobile Cocoa).

Mobile Cocoa is free for download in Spanish and has been distributed to more than 4,000 farmers in Central America as of summer 2018. There is a version available in Haitian Creole and, for Peruvian users, the app includes real-time updates on market prices and weather alerts.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO YOUTH

Lutheran World Relief recognizes the importance of helping young people in poor, rural communities change the trajectory of their life and the future of their communities. Young men and women need to be given equal opportunity to earn a predictable income that provides enough for their basic needs. Equitable access to sustainable income and information technologies for youth is a key objective of our continuing work towards building fair and profitable livelihoods in Latin America.

**WILLIAMS SARAVIA** can now stay in his home country of El Salvador. He is able to feed his family of four and has even started saving money to build a house.

His life was much different just a year ago. Unable to afford completing a college education, he took a job as a farm laborer. Working from sunup until sundown, the 30-year-old father earned only \$6 a day. He farmed his own small plot of land as much as he could.

With no other opportunities for work near his home outside San Miguel, Williams says his only option was to migrate to the United States.

The entire trajectory of his life changed when he enrolled in the Diploma in Cocoa Management program at UNIVO.

Today, Williams is running a successful small business making and selling tablets for hot chocolate. He buys fermented cocoa beans, toasts them, grinds them and mixes them with sugar and spices to make a delicious product. His wife, Margarita, and children, 11-year-old Williams and 6-year-old Merci, help to package the chocolate tablets. The tablets have been so popular that Williams produces a fresh batch almost daily to meet demand.

“This has gotten this migrating idea out of my head since I know there's opportunity here in the country,” he says.



Lutheran World Relief  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. LASTING PROMISE.

[lwr.org](http://lwr.org)