

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF IN COLOMBIA

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF (LWR) has worked in Colombia since 1985, reaching communities affected by domestic conflict and forced displacement, and assisting communities attempting voluntary returns or initiating resettlement. Together with local partner organizations, national rural development networks, and the Colombian government — LWR has expanded our reach to conflict-affected rural communities throughout the country. We work with thousands of smallholder farming families to promote climate smart agricultural practices and improve farmers' participation in agriculture value chains, especially within the cocoa and coffee industry.

AGRICULTURE VALUE CHAINS: COCOA AND COFFEE

LWR works to increase incomes and improve quality of life for rural families affected by conflict or living in post-conflict areas by diversifying their agriculture systems with the addition of cocoa and coffee as income generating cash crops. Along with direct technical assistance to farmers to establish, cultivate and harvest cocoa and coffee, LWR also works to establish and strengthen producer organizations with sound governance and sustainable business plans that allow them to manage post-harvest processing and provide services for the future. LWR helps these organizations find links to local, national and international markets and to understand how to establish relationships with buyers.

LWR is working with indigenous communities living in Colombia's Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, where conflict and insecurity had long hindered farmers' access to the technical support needed to increase outputs, improve product quality and access higher-value markets within domestic cocoa value chains. As these farmers — who traditionally produced coffee in high altitude areas — are able to resettle to the lower

altitude areas from which they were displaced, they require crops more suited to the warmer and lower altitude conditions. LWR is assisting these producers as they transition from coffee to cocoa — or supplement their high-altitude coffee farming operations with cocoa at lower altitudes — making them more resilient to market fluctuations and providing alternate income in case of environmental or climate factors affecting the coffee crops.

In Caldas' Guarinó River Basin, LWR is responding to environmental damage caused by intensive coffee monoculture and poor soil nutrient management by helping farmers diversify to shade-coffee agroforestry systems that include integrated pest management. As overstressed ecosystems recover, coffee farmers benefit from increased yields and alternative food and cash crops grown in association with the coffee, helping these households better resist market fluctuations and potential climatic or environmental shocks.



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Lutheran World Relief
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. LASTING PROMISE.

Lutheran World Relief works to improve the lives of millions of smallholder farmers and people experiencing poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America, both in times of emergencies and for the long term. LWR builds and maximizes community assets to develop strong local economies and resilient communities, toward our mission of an end to poverty, injustice and human suffering.



LWR is working with farming families in indigenous communities in Colombia to improve participation in agriculture value chains, especially within the cocoa and coffee industry. As part of the LWR project in their community, these farmers are learning how to grow and market quality cocoa.

CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE

In Colombia, more frequent flood events, more intense droughts and an increase in the median annual temperature have been negatively affecting farming and fishing communities. LWR works with vulnerable communities to alleviate the effects of climate change by protecting farmland through the construction of dikes, coastal reforestation, soil and water conservation technologies and environmental and climate education for local authorities.

As part of our work, LWR is implementing initiatives to protect the water and agricultural ecosystem services that support farmers. Farm livelihoods and quality of life in central Colombia are at risk due to deteriorating environmental conditions caused by both a changing climate and poor community hygiene and sanitation practices. As profitability of traditional agricultural activities decreases, farmers often adopt unsustainable practices that further deteriorate the natural environment. As the negative spiral continues, migration away from rural communities increases, and conflict erupts over use and control of natural resources — in particular over water and land — threatening to reignite forced displacement in the country.

With support from the Starbucks Foundation, LWR is addressing these challenges by improving water quality in the region and introducing climate-smart agricultural practices that support environmentally sustainable coffee farming. Specific project activities include installation or repair of community sanitation infrastructure, and training on hygiene and sanitation; installation or repair of on-farm coffee wet mills; and introduction of climate-smart agricultural practices that improve coffee quality and yields while also protecting the local ecosystem.



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