



## LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF IN CENTRAL AMERICA

# YOUTH REVITALIZE RURAL COFFEE-GROWING ECONOMIES FROM THE GROUND UP

**CENTRAL AMERICA** is one of the major coffee producing regions in the world. Its closeness to the equator, high altitude mountain ranges and volcanic soil provide the ideal environment for quality coffee growth. For decades, the focus of regional coffee farmers on improved quality, quantity and pricing has not changed, yet recently the world around them has shifted rapidly and unpredictably. Central American farmers face challenges in maximizing their coffee yield, obtaining a fair price and meeting their families' basic needs. They are also aging. On average, coffee farmers in the region are nearly 60 years old. Although coffee production remains the king of rural economies throughout Central America, an increasing number of young people have concluded that small-scale cultivation does not provide a stable livelihood. The volatility of international market prices and the impacts of climate change on crops have contributed to growing fears about the potential for job security through coffee production. With youth unemployment accounting for 40 percent of total unemployment in the region, young people are leaving coffee communities in hopes of better opportunities in urban centers, which begs the question of who is going to grow and harvest the next generation of specialty coffee.

Lutheran World Relief's holistic approach provides the next generation of farmers with the skills, tools and opportunities they need for viable careers in coffee farming that will meet today's needs and the aspirations of future generations in Central America.

### PARTNERS:

**Farmer Brothers, Aldea Global,**  
**IHCAFE** (Instituto Hondureño del Café),  
**UCA SOPPEXCCA** (Sociedad de  
Productores de Café de Exportación),  
**CAFENICA** (La Asociación de Cooperativas  
de Pequeños Productores de Café de Nicaragua),  
**OCDIH** (Christian Organization for  
Comprehensive Development of Honduras)



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

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.

## OUR APPROACH TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

### THE NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS

Lutheran World Relief supports young coffee farmers in operating farms as small businesses to maximize their earnings from coffee while strategically diversifying their sources of income to increase their resilience to the shocks they may face, such as the impacts of coffee diseases like *la roya*.

### EMPLOYMENT FOR RURAL YOUTH

Youth seeking employment opportunities in coffee are trained as extension agents, assisting their communities by providing advice on best practices in coffee cultivation and certification through the use of mobile technologies, either as self-employed entrepreneurs or as employees of organizations and businesses who provide these services to coffee growers.

### INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Additionally, Lutheran World Relief incorporates a range of proven gender-sensitive methodologies<sup>1</sup> in our work to ensure that both young men and women are equally able to participate in income-generating opportunities and contribute to the success of coffee as a viable rural livelihood.

## OUR EXPERIENCE

### INCREASING YOUTH CAPACITY

- In Honduras, **480 youth are increasing their qualifications and subsequently their job opportunities** by learning skills and key issues in the coffee industry, such as:
  - Production and post-harvest techniques
  - Job search resources in the productive sector
  - Use of Lutheran World Relief's Mobile Coffee app to share information about coffee cultivation
  - Coffee quality and certification



<sup>1</sup> For more on LWR's work with gender, see our Learning for Gender Integration Framework ([lwr.org/gender](http://lwr.org/gender)) and our Gender in Agriculture from Policy to Practice Toolkit ([lwr.org/gapp-toolkit](http://lwr.org/gapp-toolkit)).

- In Nicaragua, more than **550 young coffee producers** used Lutheran World Relief's Learning for Gender Integration (LGI) framework to improve their understanding of men's and women's changing roles in the business of agriculture. Participants analyzed the business case for greater gender equity at the household and cooperative level and established economic incentives to achieve the following results:

- **Women's crop yield increased by 49%.**
- The **production gap between women and men has shrunk** from 1.8 men for every 1 woman to 1.2 men for every 1 woman due to the intervention.
- **Women showed greater access to credit** as a result of participating in the LGI workshops, scoring 8% higher than men.

### FOSTERING INNOVATION

- We fund the research of university students in Nicaragua who are **conducting research on more than 20 farms** to identify the genetic markers that make coffee crops more resilient to climate change. Once the genetic markers are identified, the students will conduct and share a marketing strategy with farmer associations on how to introduce new resilient crops into existing markets.
- Young producers in Nicaragua are **reaching more than 720 smallholder farmers through climate alert messaging systems**, which utilize mobile app technology and are designed to share information and recommendations about current weather patterns and climate adaptation techniques.

## 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 Central America.

