



**LUTHERAN
WORLD RELIEF**

IN CENTRAL AMERICA

RIGHT: Beatriz Margarita Villatoro graduated from the first Diploma in Cocoa Management for Rural Youth in El Salvador, led by Lutheran World Relief in coordination with the Universidad de Oriente (UNIVO). She won seed funding to grow her small chocolate enterprise.



Since 1972, Lutheran World Relief (LWR) has helped smallholder farmers in Central America achieve profitable and sustainable livelihoods. Now in El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua, LWR collaborates with local private and public sector partners in the region, including Universidad de Oriente (UNIVO), Centro Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria y Forestal (CENTA), FundaSistemas, Red de Institutos Tecnicos (RED ITC), and Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE), to advance rural economic development through programming in climate smart agriculture, enterprise development, youth employment, health, humanitarian assistance and disaster risk reduction.



AGRICULTURE: STRENGTHENING LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD SECURITY

In Central America, LWR works with smallholder farmers to increase their food security and their participation in and income from agriculture value chains, like cocoa and coffee. We train farmers in climate-smart agricultural practices, post-harvest processing and storage as well as in other value-adding skills and certifications. We strengthen the capacity of cooperatives and agribusinesses that serve these farmers through training in governance and financial management, facilitating joint negotiation of credit and other services and boosting collective marketing and sales. Through private sector partnerships, extension training, sustainability research and deployment of digital tools such as our smartphone application [Cacao Móvil](#), we are reaching tens of thousands of new farmers with improved techniques and technologies.

IMPACT

With U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) support, LWR leads cocoa programming as part of a consortium led by Technoserve in the seven-year Maximizing Opportunities in Coffee and

Cacao in the Americas (MOCCA) project. Supporting farmers in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Peru, we implement a comprehensive approach to promoting cocoa production that focuses on increasing crop yields through agroforestry systems, improving cocoa quality, enhancing the professional capacity of both farmers and producer organizations, and facilitating linkages between cocoa buyers and sellers. Through our MOCCA programming to date, more than 25,000 cacao producers were trained in improved agricultural and post-harvest practices, and over \$1.25 million in credit services have been awarded to cocoa farmer organizations.



INCLUSION: SUPPORTING YOUTH THROUGH PRIVATE SECTOR COLLABORATION

Inclusion of young adults, particularly women and youth from marginalized groups, in the workforce is key to sustainable economic growth and is a fundamental way LWR works to address the root causes of migration from the region. We create entry points for youth in the coffee and cocoa supply chains by developing their transferable skills as producers, entrepreneurs, data collectors and service providers, even offering apprenticeships and diploma programs through partnerships with academic institutions, businesses and local governments.



IMPACT

Through our recent youth employment projects in Central America, project graduates attained an 86% employment rate, 11 youth-led small and medium enterprises (SMEs) earned over \$67,000 in gross sales by end-of-project, and 20 youth-led start-ups received \$37,000 in seed funding. In Honduras, LWR is piloting youth-focused programming that integrates mental health support with livelihoods strengthening via the online platform empleandomentos.org.

CLIMATE: ADAPTATION, MITIGATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Throughout Central America, LWR supports practices and technologies that allow communities to adapt to the effects of climate change, reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and reduce risk from climate-induced natural disasters. Our climate-smart agriculture approach, for example, promotes water conservation and effective watershed management to create healthier landscapes that are more resistant to droughts and floods. We also support clean energy initiatives such as promotion of biodigesters, improved cook stoves, and micro-hydro power plants. We advance disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives that emphasize early warning systems; Safe School initiatives that improve school communities' preparedness; community-led vulnerability mapping and response planning; building municipal fire, health and evacuation brigades; and promoting mitigation works such as retention walls and reforestation efforts.

IMPACT

In El Salvador, 26,045 residents of 50 communities were supported to develop and mobilize risk management plans that ensure communities are disaster-ready and can respond to extreme weather events. 10 municipal emergency operations centers were also established.

WASH: PROMOTING WATER ACCESS AND HYGIENE BEHAVIORS

To increase communities' access to quality water, LWR supports community management of water resources and involves local institutions in promoting best practices. We also improve handling and treatment of water for household consumption, household sanitation and waste management facilities through building water catchment, storage and household distribution infrastructure; forming and strengthening community water management committees; water testing and treatment; and educating on the links between water, hygiene and disease.

To further improve health and household sanitation outcomes, LWR utilizes education and effective social and behavior change strategies, like the innovative arts-based community development (ABCD) approach. In Guatemala, for example, LWR partners with FundaSistemas to employ the ABCD approach, which includes partnership with local artists to develop skits that advance public health messaging as well as video presentations about household sanitation followed by community discussion.

IMPACT

In Guatemala, we recently supported 1,134 people from 200 families to improve their health through safe water consumption, gray water management and the adoption of personal and household hygiene practices. Project participants have combined nutrition and hygiene practices to reduce the level of malnutrition among household members.

EMERGENCIES: WORKING AT THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

When a disaster strikes Central America, LWR immediately turns to our existing, strong local partnerships with community leaders, regional networks and local governments to design responses that meet local needs and follow international standards. Specifically, we provide food rations, non-food items, hygiene kits and water treatment supplies in the relief phase of our response, before transitioning as appropriate into an early recovery phase where we provide seeds and other inputs to help affected communities reestablish food production and income generating activities.

IMPACT

In El Salvador, we have directly assisted 18,158 people with essential items in response to emergencies in recent years, including school supplies, personal hygiene items, infant care products and bedding. Also, food baskets were delivered after extreme weather events to 4,500 residents of communities in the eastern region of the country.

THE CORUS EFFECT

Founded in 1945, Lutheran World Relief is an international development and aid organization working across Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East. We collaborate with local partners to grow inclusive and climate resilient rural economies, reduce poverty, and we respond to natural disasters and humanitarian crises.

Lutheran World Relief leads rural economic development programming at Corus International, a humanitarian organization that unites an array of world-class nonprofits and businesses, each with specialized expertise. Our reach and capabilities are amplified by the other global leaders in our Corus family, including IMA World Health, CGA Technologies and Ground Up Investing. Together, we bring the multi-dimensional, holistic solutions needed to truly achieve lasting change.