

Executive Summary

Summary of Key Achievements

Prevented electoral conflict and promoted participation among traditionally marginalized groups: Electoral conflict and electoral-related violence have become a recurring phenomenon in Guatemala over the past few decades. Electoral conflicts tend to compound and exacerbate other existing conflicts, contributing to a cycle of social conflict in rural areas. The elections took place on June 25 in a context of citizen apathy and uncertainty.¹ However, voter turnout was higher than expected,² and election-day was largely peaceful and free from serious anomalies in the voting process (with a few notable exceptions outside of the Western Highlands).³ Given the implications that electoral conflict has on the dynamics of existing social conflict, and in response to partners' priorities during the electoral period, the Peacebuilding Project prioritized actions related to preventing electoral conflict this quarter. The project contributed to preventing electoral conflict and promoting participation through three key areas: strengthening GoG capacity and coordination; supporting inclusive civic participation and a culture of peace; and conducting diverse election observation.



GoG capacity and coordination: The Peacebuilding Project continued to build capacity of GoG⁴ institutions to identify and mitigate electoral conflict in the Western Highlands. This included a strong focus on increasing the capacity of CODESACs⁵ to analyze electoral conflict and to create plans for preventing electoral conflict from escalating into violence. The project also provided electoral trainings for COPADEH,⁶ whose delegates

participate in the CODESACs. At the municipal level, in coordination with the UPCV,⁷ the project facilitated the replication of trainings on electoral crimes and offenses for COMUPRES⁸, COCOPRES⁹, and youth and women's groups in 11 municipalities. Focusing on preventing electoral conflict at the community level is important given the decentralization of polling stations and the possibility of local conflicts on election day. The project will hold sessions with the CODESACs ahead of the run-off elections and then following the elections to assess the impact that their plans had on mitigating electoral conflict.

¹ <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/21/1183408420/controversy-and-apaty-mar-guatemalas-upcoming-presidential-election>

² <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/28/progressive-party-stages-surprise-upset-in-guatemala-elections>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/es/2023/06/25/espanol/elecciones-guatemala.html>

⁴ Government of Guatemala

⁵ Departmental Commission on Security and Conflict Management (*Comisión Departamental de Seguridad y Atención de Conflictos*)

⁶ Presidential Commission for Peace and Human Rights (*Comisión Presidencial por la Paz y los Derechos Humanos*)

⁷ Community Violence Prevention Unit (*Unidad de Prevención Comunitaria de la Violencia*)

⁸ Municipal Violence Prevention Commissions (*Comisión Municipal de Prevención de la Violencia*)

⁹ Community Violence Prevention Commission (*Comisión Comunitaria de Prevención de la Violencia*)

Inclusive civic participation: To foster the participation of youth in the electoral process, who have expressed a sense of apathy and disconnect,¹⁰ the project facilitated a “Get out the vote!” youth exchange through the *Voceros Juveniles*¹¹ network and DEMOS¹², with 88 youth participants from seven organizations and five departments. The two-day even promoted the informed vote for youth, women, indigenous people, and LGBTQI+¹³ individuals by providing the space for youth to learn about the electoral process, analyze challenges for inclusive participation, learn about citizen volunteer opportunities during the elections, and engage in role-play replicating a voting center. The project also supported pre-electoral dialogues and workshops with an LGBTQI+ lens through SOMOS¹⁴ and conducted a Youth and Civic Participation diploma course in partnership CIPREVICA.¹⁵



Diverse election observation: National electoral observation efforts are critical, as they are designed to generate confidence in the electoral process among citizens and can provide important recommendations for improvements. Election-day observation can also assess the conditions for voting for traditionally marginalized groups including youth, indigenous women, LGBTQI+ individuals, and people with disabilities. This quarter, in response to an analysis of the needs, the project rapidly mobilized to provide grant extensions to MOLOJ¹⁶ and SOMOS to support inclusive electoral observation. Through their observations, MOLOJ accredited and deployed 40 electoral observers—37 of whom were indigenous women—and SOMOS accredited and deploy 60 electoral observers—31 of whom identify as LGBTQI+. These 100 diverse electoral observers

¹⁰ <https://prensacomunitaria.org/2023/03/mas-de-un-millon-de-jovenes-entre-18-y-25-anos-no-votaran-en-las-elecciones-generales-2023/>

¹¹ Youth Voices for Peace (*Red de Voceros y Voceras Juveniles para la Paz*)

¹² Central American Institute of Studies for Social Democracy (*Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios para la Democracia Social*)

¹³ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex

¹⁴ Association We Are Diverse Youth in Action (*Asociación Somos Jovenes Diversos en Acción*)

¹⁵ Research Center for the Prevention of Violence in Central America (*Centro de Investigación para la Prevención de la Violencia en Centroamérica*)

¹⁶ Political Association for Mayan Women (*Asociación Política de Mujeres Mayas*)

conducted their observations in 51 municipalities in Guatemala. Neither organization observed widespread issues, but both noted areas for improvement in terms of treatment of and access by vulnerable groups. Both organizations will observe the run-off elections and will provide recommendations for future electoral processes.



Hosted VIP USAID visit: The Peacebuilding Project hosted a visit with Marcela Escobari, USAID’s Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean on May 22 in Chichicastenango, Quiché, during which she participated in two activities. The first was a presentation and dialogue with four youth from the Mayan Youth Conflict Mediator Network on the prevention, mediation, and transformation of conflicts using the Mayan legal

framework. During the activity, the four youth mediators utilized a dramatization to demonstrate a common conflict in the region and the skills they’ve gained to mitigate conflict and then engaged in dialogue with the USAID visitors. The second activity was entitled From Maya Women for Maya Women: preventing and responding to gender-based violence through traditional healing practices, presented by representatives from Association Miriam, during which Assistant Administrator Escobari learned how Association Miriam supports survivors of gender-based violence (GBV)—the majority of them indigenous women—by using culturally relevant healing techniques based on the Mayan worldview. Both interactions provided Assistant Administrator Escobari with tangible and personal examples of how USAID is directly supporting actions to build safe communities through violence and social conflict prevention interventions through local partners. It was also an opportunity for project participants and partners to share their knowledge and learn from each other.

Supported three LGBTQI+ partner organizations in exercising human rights: With partner organization LAMBDA beginning implementation in May to build the organizational capacity of four LGBTQI+ groups or collectives in the Western Highlands, the project is currently in the implementation phase of three subgrants that contribute to the full exercise of LGBTQI+ human rights. These subgrants are through LAMBDA,



responsible for capacity building for LGBTQI+ organizations; SOMOS, responsible for training in sexual diversity, gender identity, and LGBTQI+ human rights as well as inclusive electoral observation and capacity building; and *Vidas Paralelas*, responsible for providing differentiated psychosocial and legal attention to LGBTQI+ survivors of bias-based violence. These local civil society organizations are working in parallel to one another and have coordinated and overlapped efforts in key activities this quarter, such as during an exchange facilitated by *Vidas Paralelas* in which eight LGBTQI+ organizations came together, including SOMOS and LAMBDA (see Activity 2.1.2). This amplifies their efforts and contributed to increased sustainability.

Indicator Data

During FY23Q3,

- 5611 unique individuals (3277 women and 2083 men, 244 no response and eight choose not to identify) participated in activities addressing the peaceful management and resolution of conflict;
- 247 events, trainings, or activities designed to build support for peace or reconciliation were implemented;
- 109 authorities and non-governmental actors (54 women, 44 men and 11 no response) demonstrated an increased capacity to respond to and resolve conflicts at the local, municipal, and/or national levels;
- 215 women participated in a substantive role or position in a peacebuilding process;
- 338 people (209 women, 99 men, 29 no response and one choose not to identify) engaged in cooperative community dialogue; and
- 138 unique individuals (all women) were reached by a United States Government (USG) funded intervention providing GBV services.