

Executive Summary

Summary of Key Achievements, FY2023

Communities and local authorities have increased capacity and coordination to effectively respond to local conflicts: Critical to transforming conflicts into positive change for communities is understanding the underlying causes of conflicts. Communities themselves are best positioned to understand the often complex and interrelated sources of conflict. They are also best positioned to identify potential solutions, which is key for sustainability. As such, the first step in reducing social conflict and strengthening social cohesion is to ensure that communities and local authorities have the tools and capacity to effectively prevent and respond to conflicts.



Leaders from seven communities in Chiantla participated in a process to define and document their borders, in response to their CVs.

Citizens in 133 communities in 15 municipalities are addressing social conflict through constructive and sustainable mechanisms: Using participatory processes, the project worked with 133 communities in FY2023 to identify local conflicts, make collective decisions on their peacebuilding priorities, and devise strategies to advance them, embodied in their own, unique community vision (CV). Through sustained and constructive interaction, 1,673 citizens improved their understanding of sources of conflict and resilience, built trust, and strengthened relationships this fiscal year (bringing the total to 4,948 citizens over the life of project). As a result of this improved coordination, in FY2023, 53 CVs were developed and 105 actions from the CVs

were implemented in response to 93 CVs in 13 municipalities (bringing the life of project total to 133 CVs developed and 163 actions implemented in 95 communities). By providing local actors with the tools for constructive dialogue and strengthening their capacity to resolve differences, the project is contributing to long-term changes in how citizens work together to address governance challenges.

Mediator network is formed, trained, and responding to local conflicts: The Peacebuilding Project promotes mediation as an alternative mechanism for peaceful conflict resolution. The project has integrated a Conflict Mediator Network across 15 municipalities with 62 mediators to serve as a resource that communities, municipalities, and departmental authorities can call upon to generate mechanisms for dialogue or facilitate conflict resolution. This fiscal year, the Peacebuilding Project established a Mayan Youth Conflict Mediator Network, providing trainings and exchanges on the prevention, mediation, resolution, and transformation of community conflicts using the practices and knowledge of the Mayan legal framework. The project then integrated the Mayan Youth Conflict Mediator

Network into the Conflict Mediator Network and linked them with their respective municipal commissions. Linking the Mayan Youth Conflict Mediator Network to municipal commissions and the Conflict Mediator Network leverages the unique perspectives of youth, provides additional resources for conflict mediation and prevention, and increases social inclusion efforts in the Western Highlands.

Inclusive local-level engagement and civic participation is being generated and sustained: The project recognizes that social exclusion is one of the contributing factors to persistent social conflict in the country and that women, youth, indigenous peoples, and LGBTQI+ individuals¹ are among the most marginalized groups. The project also recognizes that these groups suffer the impacts of social conflicts more severely, increasing their vulnerability, but that they play an important role in the peaceful resolution of conflicts in their communities.

Indigenous authorities are actively engaging in the prevention and mitigation of social conflict, using practices from their worldview and ensuring cultural relevance: Indigenous authorities have a reputation of respect, trust and impartiality in their communities, making them fundamental actors in conflict resolution. In accordance with the Mayan value *Tink'ulub'ej*, “give and receive advice and guidance,” the project formed an Indigenous Advisory Group (IAG) to integrate indigenous perspectives. A key achievement this year were exchanges held, per IAG guidance, between indigenous authorities from the Western Highlands and state judicial representatives to promote cross-learning around conflict resolution practices. The initial exchange



Ancestral authorities from eight indigenous groups participated in an exchange to commemorate International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

was regional and resulted in an agreement to hold local level exchanges. The first local-level exchange was in Nebaj, between ancestral Ixil authorities and state judicial representatives. The second was in Totonicapán, where the project supported the reactivation of a Justice Sector Table after more than three years of being dormant, providing ancestral and state authorities with a space to communicate and coordinate in addressing and preventing conflict within the municipality. Finally, the Peacebuilding Project provided a training on alternative methods for conflict resolution in San Miguel Ixtahuacán with 13 B'aktún, community mayors, members of Community Development Councils (*Consejos Comunitarios de Desarrollo*, COCODEs), representatives from the Attorney General (*Ministerio Público*, MP), and local judges. In commemoration of International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, the project and IAG held an activity with indigenous authorities representing eight

¹ LGBTQI+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and Intersex, with the “+” sign representing gender and sexual minorities that do not identify under the LGBTQI umbrella. LGBTQI+ people or individuals is recommended instead of persons, populations, or communities.

indigenous groups to share achievements and challenges in promoting and respecting indigenous peoples' rights as well as best practices of ancestral-oriented peacebuilding.

Diverse youth came together to encourage youth participation in the elections: Youth participation in peacebuilding and civic participation initiatives is a priority for the Peacebuilding Project. This year, given the electoral context, the project prioritized supporting youth engagement in the electoral process, providing them with spaces to share their perspectives and elevate their voices. For example, the project supported a two-day "Get out the vote" event, convening a diverse group of young people from five departments and seven civil society organizations. The goal for the youth-led activity was to strengthen democratic processes by providing the space for youth to learn about the electoral process, analyze challenges for inclusive participation, and learn about citizen volunteer opportunities during the elections. The project also supported the youth in developing messages and videos about the right to vote, how to register, and the importance of electoral participation, which were then translated by the youth into three Mayan languages and shared on social media. The opportunity for youth to have a sense of agency and to have their voices heard is critical for a sense of rootedness and for the democratic future of Guatemala.



Diverse youth from SOMOS, Voceros Juveniles, and Red de Redes came together in Quetzaltenango to create videos promoting youth's informed vote.

Women in the Western Highlands are coming together to increase their capacity and opportunities for civic engagement, which includes living a life free from violence: Civic participation of women in local decision-making spaces as critical for achieving inclusive development in Guatemala. As such, the project is working to strengthen women's leadership and advocacy skills with a specific focus on peaceful conflict transformation. Through a local indigenous partner organization, the project supported the creation of groups of *Asesoras de Cambio*; 236 women successfully finalized a five-session course and now have the capacity to better identify, prioritize, and advocate for their needs. *Asesoras*



de Cambio then worked together to create 10 municipal advocacy plans. The project has positioned *Asesoras de Cambio* as a strong, interconnected network of indigenous women that will continue to make their voices heard in decision-making spaces long after the Peacebuilding Project has finalized.

The Peacebuilding Project recognizes the strong correlation between family-level violence and community-level violence; domestic violence is an issue that negatively impacts social cohesion and contributes to the disintegration of the social fabric in already vulnerable communities. The trauma caused by gender-based violence (GBV) can negatively impact survivors in their relationships, self-esteem, behavior, work, and day to day life. In FY2023, the Peacebuilding Project helped 398 GBV survivors heal through culturally relevant practices (bringing the life of project total to 623), contributing to the overall wellbeing of their families and communities. Some of these women are replicating their learnings and have developed the capacity to support and guide other women that are in similar situations.



LGBTQI+ individuals are empowered in exercising their fundamental human rights: LGBTQI+ individuals face substantial obstacles in fully exercising their political and civic rights in Guatemala, many time facing discrimination, exclusion, intimidation, harassment and other forms of violence and conflict. In the rural Western Highlands, discrimination intersects with high levels of poverty and lack of opportunities. In response, the project has taken a three-pronged approach to support LGBTQI+ human rights. Firstly, the project has supported the development and implementation of a culturally relevant methodology for trainings on LGBTQI+ concepts and rights. Secondly, the

The Peacebuilding Project prioritized the substantive inclusion of LGBTQI+ individuals into all project activities.

Peacebuilding Project has supported the provision of comprehensive care for 48 LGBTQI+ victims of prejudice-based violence in the Western Highlands. Finally, the project is working with four nascent LGBTQI+ organizations to strengthen their capacity to advocate for the human rights of the LGBTQI+ population and to prevent and respond to bias-based violence in the Western Highlands.

Diverse actors are identifying and working together to address conflicts: Social conflict in Guatemala is a systemic, multidimensional, multicausal, and complex phenomenon that requires a sustained interinstitutional response. As part of its commitment to sustainability and localization, the Peacebuilding Project design focuses on facilitating connections between communities, government institutions, and local civil society to prevent and mitigate local conflicts.



Diverse community members and local authorities are working together to address priority conflicts identified by communities: The project has successfully supported 93 communities in implementing priority actions in collaboration with external actors. One such example is Namá, San Juan Cotzal, where the community identified logging as a trigger for conflict. Namá's lush forests have made the community a target for logging among private companies and neighboring communities. In the past when leaders have sought to protect their forests through informal mechanisms, they noted a deterioration in their relationship with neighboring communities and the municipality. To address the conflict, the project first worked with the community to build capacity among COCODE members to manage projects with support from Regional Council for Urban and Rural Development (*Consejo Regional de Desarrollo Urbano y Rural, CORETUR*). Then, in conjunction with National Forestry Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Bosques, INAB*), the government entity responsible for forest management, the project facilitated a training on forestry law and mitigation and prevention plans for logging conflict. This included raising awareness about forest conservation for community members, including women and youth. Finally, the project supported the community in creating a logging regulation. The regulation outlines who is allowed to log, how much, permissions, and fines, positively impacting 69 families and contributing to stronger social cohesion in Namá.

GoG institutions demonstrate increased capacity to respond to and prevent local conflicts:

A strong GoG institution responsible for human rights, social conflict, and peacebuilding is critical for social cohesion at the local level. For this reason, the Peacebuilding Project has supported the Presidential Commission for Peace and Human Rights (*Comisión Presidencial de Paz y Derechos Humanos, COPADEH*) since its creation in July 2020; the impact of that work was apparent this year when the GoG extended COPADEH's mandate for ten years. The COPADEH Executive Director believes that the extension is in large part due to the 10-year strategic plan developed with project support. The consistent support that the Peacebuilding Project has



Strengthening the COPADEH and delegates like Blanca López has been a priority for the Peacebuilding Project, who has contributed to building the commission's capacity to address social conflict with workshops and resources.

provided to COPADEH has also contributed to COPADEHs preventative and transformative approach to addressing social conflict as well as their ability to communicate effectively and strategically. The sum of these contributions provides stability and sustainability to the commission despite the upcoming political changes in the GoG. Representatives from COPADEH, as well as Ministry of the Interior (*Ministerio de Gobernación, MINGOB*)/ Community Violence Prevention Unit (*Unidad de Prevención Comunitaria de la Violencia, UPCV*), regularly participate in other Peacebuilding Project activities and events, which demonstrates their commitment as well as the relevance of Peacebuilding Project activities in the current context.



GoG and civil society actors worked together in identifying and addressing sources of electoral conflict, preventing electoral conflict in the Western Highlands: Given the risk that the 2023 elections would exacerbate existing societal divides, this year the project worked to mitigate electoral conflict in the Western Highlands. The project prioritized training Departmental Commissions on Security and Conflict Management (*Comisión Departamental de Seguridad y Atención de Conflictos*, CODESACs) in preventing electoral conflict, to capitalize on these bodies' role as inter-institutional spaces for dialogue and coordination between public institutions, civil society, the private sector, and municipalities. These trainings helped the CODESACs to carry out a systematic risk analysis of regional electoral conflict by identifying potential conflicts and defining prevention and response strategies that allowed them to implement mitigation efforts like roundtable discussions, zero aggression agreements, security organization, and awareness raising among candidates. COPADEH delegates who are part of the CODESACs also took their findings to the Interinstitutional Electoral Conflict Prevention Tables created by the Supreme Electoral Court (*Tribunal Supremo Electoral*, TSE). Departmental crisis rooms on electoral security also used these findings, with the departmental government and representatives from the COPADEH and CODESACs participating and managing electoral conflict response. During meetings with the Quiché and Huehuetenango commissions in September, members noted that electoral violence was down in 2023 (even in high-risk municipalities) compared to previous elections and that they attributed that decrease to the trainings and mitigation plans supported by the project.



To encourage an inclusive election process, the project supported two civil society organizations (CSOs) in implementing electoral observation through a lens of diversity and inclusion, deploying 100 diverse observers: one observation focused on the participation and inclusion of Mayan women in the electoral process as well as documenting discrimination or violence against Mayan women; and the other focused on the participation of women and LGBTQI+ individuals, including any cases of electoral violence towards these groups. Both CSOs plan to provide recommendations to the TSE to improve representation and decrease discrimination in future elections.

To promote inclusive electoral observation, the Peacebuilding Project provided grant extensions to project partners MOLOJ and SOMOS, who trained, accredited, and deployed 100 diverse election observers.

Private sector organizations are actively engaged in preventing social conflict: The project has been successful in strengthening a public-private partnership between the Carlos F. Novella Foundation (a private sector foundation) and the UPCV and COPADEH (GoG institutions) in responding to mutual priorities related to preventing social conflict and violence. The project and Novella Foundation conducted a training series on conflict



transformation for staff from MINGOB/ UPCV, COPADEH, and municipal representatives from the department of Guatemala. Civil society partners ProPaz and Institute for Sustainable Development (*Instituto de Enseñanza para el Desarrollo Sostenible, IEPADES*) also provided their expertise during the trainings.

Lack of economic resources can make women vulnerable to violence by creating self-perpetuating patterns of violence and poverty. To respond to this violence, the project provided a subgrant to Association of Guatemalan Exporters (*Asociación Guatemalteca de Exportadores, AGEXPORT*) to financially empower women through income-generating activities, utilizing their proven methodologies. Their wide network of small businesses to connect with women's collectives provides significant value to the project. One of the groups among AGEXPORT's 34 is the women's group in Pachoc, which learned to embroider with support from the project, Cooperation for the Rural Development of the Western Highlands (*Cooperación para el Desarrollo Rural de Occidente, CDRO*) (a local Civil Society Organization (CSO)), and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (*Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Alimentación, MAGA*) (a GoG institution). AGEXPORT is the Peacebuilding Project's largest contributor of leverage.



The Peacebuilding Project worked with CDRO to support the women of Pachoc with a course in cross-stitch and embroidery.