

THE RECIPROCITY FUND

ALIAR

GUATEMALA



Alianza Agroindustrial y Artesanal Rural "Aliar" is a federation of small producers of snow peas, sweet peas, avocados, and blackberries, among other crops. Aliar is the commercial arm of its associates to obtain better prices for their products and, thus, contribute to the quality of life of the small producers. Aliar works with 800 families (30% women) in 5 different departments of Guatemala. All the families belong to indigenous communities.

Aliar was founded in 2003 and is based in Chimaltenango, in the central highlands of Guatemala. The organization collects products from several departments, all of which are concentrated in the Western Highlands. Aliar initially started distributing in the local market, and since 2006, it has been exporting. This contrasts with most of the vegetable market in Guatemala, where vegetables are marketed as a low-value product for local consumption.

Three indigenous groups out of the 21 that exist in Guatemala benefit from their relationship with Aliar. These are the Kaqchiquel, K'iche, and Mam ethnic groups, for whom the mountains around them have been their home. Aliar gives them the opportunity to market their crops internationally.

Aliar provides technical assistance at least three times a year to smallholder farmers through workshops focused on fertilization plans, fresh produce safety standards, awareness of water uses for pre-harvest, harvest, and post-harvest periods, and field visits. The main objective of technical assistance is to mitigate the problems of climate change and improve crop quality and productivity.

IMPACT OVERVIEW

Description	
To raise the level of production, collection, processing, and packaging of vegetables for export by the Kaqchiquel, K'iche', and Mam indigenous groups of the Guatemalan highlands. To value agriculture not only for subsistence but as a means of income generation and development.	
No. de beneficiaries	800 families
% of women	30

COMMUNITY

	Country: Guatemala
	Municipalities: Chimaltenango El Quiché Sololá Huehuetenango Sacatepéquez
	Comunidades: Kaqchiquel, K'iche Mam

Impact Background



Guatemala is a multiethnic, pluricultural, and multilingual society where the indigenous Mayan, Xinka, Garifuna, and Ladino coexist. Indigenous peoples suffer inequality and exclusion because of racism and structural discrimination. They continue to lag in health, education, jobs, and income compared to the rest of the Guatemalan society. This is even worse for indigenous women.

It is estimated that in 2023, 55% of the Guatemalan population live in poverty, of which 75% are indigenous. 58% of indigenous communities suffer from chronic malnutrition. Guatemala's Constitution recognizes the existence of indigenous people and a multicultural society.

The Mayan culture in Guatemala comprises more than 21 indigenous groups; the fundamental difference is the language. Indigenous people make up 43% of the total population. Aliar works with indigenous farmers from three Mayan ethnic groups: Kaqchiquel, K'iche', and Mam.

The Kaqchikel ethnic group comes from the highlands of western Guatemala. Its main settlements are in seven departments, including Chimaltenango. In rural and suburban areas, the Kaqchikels base their economy on agriculture, growing beans, corn, and vegetables for self-consumption. Vegetables are of greater production and rotation and are marketed as a source of income.

Now, the Maya-K'iche are an indigenous group that lives in the country's highlands, mainly in six departments. The K'iche are also one of the five most numerous indigenous peoples in Latin America, exceeding one million individuals. Traditionally, the Maya-K'iche have been farmers and traders, although today, we can find them in all sectors of the national economy. In fact, many have moved to other cities to carry out other activities and improve their quality of life.

The Mam ethnic group occupies approximately 8% of Guatemala's general population. The Mam Maya live in the southwest of the country and across the Mexican border. Since pre-Hispanic times, the Mam Maya have been primarily subsistence farmers, growing corn, beans, and squash. The land was cultivated almost continuously at the bottoms of the richer valleys.

Mayan agriculture is a fascinating legacy of this ancient civilization that is closely related to nature. Their environmentally friendly farming techniques and deep knowledge of natural cycles have been of great relevance both in the past and present.

Impact Delivery

The agricultural sector in Guatemala is one of the main sectors of the economy, not only in terms of job creation but mainly because it contributes about 23% of GDP. In 2021 alone, it accounted for between 25% and 30% of the country's exports.

Aliar benefits more than 800 small producers, including young people and women, representing 140 hectares of different types of vegetables, using organic matter and bio inputs for their production, using the soil's living organisms to strengthen it.

The cultivated area among producers is 140 hectares, where snow peas, sweet peas, and green beans are produced. Each producer owns 0.17 hectares, and on average, each producer yields 1,300 kg. Aliar pays USD 1.66 per kilo, representing a potential annual income of USD 2,166 before the costs and expenses of the crops. The price is determined at the market price, and Aliar pays in cash, depending on the volume delivered by each farmer. Aliar collects products four times a year, having two strong seasons, between January and April and then from July to December.



In addition to supporting small producers, Aliar employs five full-time people, to whom it pays a little more than the minimum Guatemalan wage, which is approximately USD 450 per month. It also generates 80 temporary jobs in the two high seasons of the year. Each temporary worker receives about USD 256 monthly, working two to three days.

Each region has a coordinator; this helps to network so Aliar can reach small farmers with the same services and quality. Community leaders assist the coordinators in navigating the language of each indigenous community. Aliar has a board of directors and a president responsible for coordinating fieldwork with small farmers and operating in a democratic, participatory way. Indigenous communities benefit from Aliar as it promotes income generation, empowerment, high-quality production, and access to new markets while respecting their cultures and traditions.

Results

<i>Improvement of livelihood.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide indigenous smallholder farmers with direct marketing and technical assistance. • Ensures that smallholder farmers are fairly compensated for their products.
<i>Environmental preservation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes and methodologies adapted to different ethnicities, cultures, and territories empowered indigenous communities in organizational and crop management. • Identify community projects by indigenous groups to address emerging needs specific to their region.
<i>Cultural preservation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the soil and natural resources sacred to Guatemala's indigenous culture by using non-chemical agricultural inputs to produce organic vegetables and maintain the balance of the ecosystem.