



©FAO/Lucie Chochołata

South-South and triangular cooperation

Scaling-up Mesoamerica hunger free

Effective public policies and legal frameworks for improving food security and enabling better opportunities for vulnerable rural populations

Development challenge

Despite the considerable progress made in recent years, more than 11 million people are still undernourished in Mesoamerica. Undernutrition coexists with a steadily increasing rate of overweight and obesity among children and adults.

Hunger in Mesoamerica is especially prevalent in indigenous communities and rural areas, where a large part of the population also suffers from poverty, lack of opportunities, insecurity and violence as well as a high vulnerability to extreme weather events, forcing many young adults to migrate to urban areas or abroad.

Furthermore, there is often a lack of effective and sufficiently funded public policies, programmes and legal frameworks focused on targeting specific needs of smallholder farmers living in rural areas, who generally have limited access to extension services and markets.

Development solution

Through the Mesoamerica hunger free programme, FAO is providing technical assistance to lawmakers and the Ministries of Agriculture, Social Welfare and

Education in nine countries (Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic) in preparing legal instruments and developing and implementing public policies and programmes focused on achieving food security and nutrition and reducing rural poverty.

Simultaneously, with emphasis on rural territories with high extreme poverty and undernourishment rates, and limited livelihood options, the programme is facilitating the

validation and scaling up of best practices to strengthen local food security governance, enhance smallholder farmer's production and innovation capacities, encourage local community involvement, promote social roots as well as connect family farmers to markets.

At regional level, the programme enables knowledge and experience sharing among countries and contributes to place the fight against hunger and poverty in the political agenda through a comprehensive communication strategy.

Key results

To date, key results include:

- 25 public policy processes and 21 legislative processes supported in nine countries; 2 model laws at regional level,

The programme adapts its focus areas of implementation according to each country's specific priorities, needs and political and social contexts, within existing national policies and legal frameworks and/or supporting the development of new ones as required by national governments. At regional level two model laws, on family farming and on small-scale fisheries were approved by the Latin American parliament (Parlatino) and will provide governing principles and definitions for law, policies or strategies improvement at national level.

- Strengthened capacities of members of the 'Parliamentary Fronts Against Hunger' in Mesoamerican countries.

The establishment and/or continuity of Parliamentary Fronts Against Hunger has been supported and technical advice provided in the development of draft legislation. Lawmakers from different political parties express their commitment and work together in order to allocate more and better public resources towards reducing hunger to zero.

- A catalogue of existing legislation in Mesoamerica on issues related to food security and nutrition is available online.

In collaboration with Parlatino, an online knowledge community (comunidadparlamentaria.org) is now available to lawmakers, scholars and the wider public.

- National strategies and databases to register family farmers developed in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

The programme has supported the Ministries of Agriculture on defining what is considered family farming in each national context and designing methodological tools to enable voluntary registration. Moreover, national plans on family farming have been designed in Panama and the Dominican Republic through inclusive, participatory processes.

- Rural territorial development processes strengthened in 51 territories in nine countries.

Jointly with municipalities and national authorities, the programme contributes to develop local capacities by promoting the adoption and use of best practices to increase sustainable livelihoods and adaptation to climate change.

This also include strengthening of smallholder farmer's organizations to become providers of school feeding programmes in Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic.

With the technical cooperation of Mexican institutions the design and construction of pilot rainwater-harvesting systems was supported in six countries.

The technical solutions are serving different purposes, ranging from agricultural production and aquaculture to providing purified drinking water to school communities located in dry areas, and are a reference for scaling up the development solution.

Solution exchange

FAO has joined forces with the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID) to implement the 'Mesoamerica hunger free' South-South cooperation programme. Since 2015, the Organization is facilitating the South-South and triangular cooperation through two channels:

- A specialized, demand-driven component of the programme that allows for the mobility of Mexican expertise to meet specific technical cooperation demands requested by the countries, and which complement the other programme's actions; and
- The policy dialogue processes, peer-to-peer exchange of experiences and capacity development activities carried out at regional level with different stakeholders of beneficiary countries (policy makers, technical teams, lawmakers).

Potential for upscaling

Mesoamerica hunger free programme current results demonstrate that strengthening institutional frameworks and providing legislators and decision-makers with effective technical solutions validated in the field can significantly reinforce political commitment towards

achieving zero hunger and improve effectiveness of public policies aimed at reducing poverty, especially in rural areas, and enabling better opportunities for the most vulnerable populations.

Contact us

Interested partners are invited to get in touch with FAO for more information:

south-south-cooperation@fao.org

