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GUATEMALA

SNAPSHOT

It Pays to Protect the Environment

Local leaders prioritize the environment to protect future economic growth.



Authorities tour San Jerónimo where a payment for environmental services initiative is underway.

Photo: USAID Policy Regulatory Support for Economic Growth Project

Municipalities who witnessed the effects that the PES initiative was having on the San Jerónimo community committed to implementing PES mechanisms to address the effects of climate change, and protect natural resources in their communities.

Protection of natural resources, particularly in areas of high ecological importance such as the Maya Biosphere Reserve and the highlands regions, is crucial to Guatemala's economic future. Many rural, small, and medium size businesses depend on forestry, tourism, shade-grown quality coffee, and agriculture for their income. The Government of Guatemala is taking steps to protect the country's diverse natural resources through a sustainable community level approach.

The USAID Policy Regulatory Support for Economic Growth (PRS) Project provided support to mayors and representatives of 13 municipalities in the western highlands, an area with a high percentage of poverty, food insecurity, and high vulnerability to climate change, who received training on how to put a payment for environmental services (PES) mechanism in place to recover costs associated with environmental protection while also providing essential municipal services to residents such as water or sanitation.

Eight mayors, five local representatives, and the Vice-Minister of Natural Resources met to learn from the experience of the San Jerónimo community. This community is adding a small fee to the cost of water services, which is then used to support conservation efforts in the community. Following the event, eight municipalities committed themselves to promoting a participatory process in their own municipalities, and implementing PES mechanisms to improve local conditions and resources to protect natural resources.

In addition to training municipal authorities on PES, the PRS Project worked to gather experiences of environmental services mechanisms in Guatemala and analyzed the lessons learned from 33 initiatives over the last decade. Of those 33, three experiences were used as a base to build a PES proposal model for communities. Providing these guidelines is part of USAID's contribution to ensure livelihoods for future generations.

Telling Our Story

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