



Duration:

Length:	24 months
Start Date:	November 2024
End Date:	November 2026

Budget:

TOTAL:	\$ 2 Million
Mercy Corps	\$1,531,018.00

Implementing Agencies and Partners:

Implementing Agencies: Mercy Corps, in consortium with ADRI, Fundación Propaz and Paz Joven

National Counterparts: National Youth Council (CONJUVE); Presidential Commission for Peace and Human Rights (COPADEH); Departmental Government of Alta Verapaz; municipal authorities of Tukurú, Santa Catalina La Tinta, Panzós, Senahú and El Estor

CONTEXT

The Polochic Valley is one of the territories historically most affected by agrarian, social and environmental conflict in Guatemala; prolonged land disputes, the structural exclusion of Indigenous and peasant communities, and limited institutional capacities for conflict prevention and peaceful resolution generated mistrust toward institutions, fragmentation of the social fabric and recurrent tensions that affect territorial governance and social cohesion.

In this context, youth (predominantly Indigenous, rural and living in situations of exclusion) have been marginalized from decision-making spaces and territorial governance mechanisms, despite their central role in community life and in the sustainability of local peace processes. This exclusion has limited their ability to participate constructively in the transformation of conflicts affecting their territories.

The Youth Promotion Funded-initiative Active Youth for Peace (JUVEPAZ), under implementation by Mercy Corps, seeks to address these gaps, via strengthening youth agency and inclusive institutional frameworks and territorial dialogue mechanisms, as key strategies for conflict prevention and the construction of sustainable peace in rural areas.

OBJECTIVES

To contribute to the peaceful reduction of agrarian, social and environmental conflict in the Polochic Valley by strengthening youth leadership, agency capacities and effective participation in local and regional territorial governance mechanisms.

KEY IMPACT AND RESULTS

The PBF Active Youth for Peace project contributed in 2025 to strengthening departmental and municipal mechanisms for managing agrarian, environmental and social conflicts in Alta Verapaz and the Polochic Valley, a region where a high percentage of conflicts are concentrated. The project's support has led to the updating of a Public Policy for Conflict Resolution in Alta Verapaz, and a series of associated protocols for addressing agrarian, social and environmental conflicts; the establishment of an inter-institutional Commission on Conflict Resolution in Alta Verapaz as well as a Unit for Addressing Conflicts within the Governor's office, financed by state resources. Within the framework of the updated Policy, Municipal Commissions for Conflict Management have also been set up in the five municipalities of the Polochic Valley, creating greater institutional infrastructure for sustainability. 261 youth leaders, and 130 youth surveyors have been trained to participate in these municipal mechanisms, where 112 cases of conflicts (46 in Alta Verapaz and 66 in Izabal) have already been identified for resolution. The large majority - 96% - of these cases are agrarian conflicts of different types, with the remaining conflicts relating to environmental issues. The conflict management governance model being set up in Alta Verapaz, which includes significant youth participation, is being studied by the newly created Presidential Commission on Conflict Management (COPRECON) as potentially replicable in other departments of the country suffering high levels of conflicts.

CATALYTIC EFFECTS

Non-financial catalytic effects The project has generated high strategic-value non-financial catalytic effects by institutionalizing conflict management practices through public policies and departmental protocols, and by sustainably integrating youth into formal territorial governance mechanisms. In addition, it has developed replicable models of Sustainable Rural Technology Centers as community peace infrastructures and strengthened inter-institutional coordination among the State, local governments, civil society and organized youth.

Taken together, these effects will extend the project's impact beyond its implementation period and reinforce the sustainability of results, positioning youth as key actors in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the Polochic Valley.

Financial catalytic effects The project has had a potential catalytic effect. Mercy Corps has submitted a proposal to a private foundation, with a value of up to \$20 million, that builds on elements of Juvepaz, including strengthening inclusive governance mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution. The proposed project would expand to additional geographic areas affected by high levels of territorial conflict, such as Quiché, Huehuetenango, and Petén. The proposal has been submitted to the donor, and a decision is anticipated in the first quarter of 2026.

Voices from the Field

"I am a peace messenger, contributing to inclusive participation."

Jade Ortiz, young project participant, Alta Verapaz.