



Promoting the management of the social, political, and institutional environment to help reduce agrarian conflict in the Polochic Valley

January 2026



Duration:

Length:	49 months
Start Date:	January 2022
End Date:	February 2026

Budget:

TOTAL:	\$ 2.5 Million
FAO	\$1,332,320.00
OHCHR	\$842,400.00
WFP	\$325,280.00

Implementing Agencies and Partners:

Implementing Agencies: FAO, OHCHR, WFP

National Counterparts: Presidential Commission for Peace and Human Rights (COPADEH); agrarian, social and environmental institutions at the national, departmental and municipal levels; Indigenous and peasant community organizations of the Polochic Valley.

CONTEXT

The Polochic Valley is one of the territories historically most affected by agrarian conflict in Guatemala. A combination of historical inequities in access to land, insecurity of tenure, weak State presence, and structural conditions of poverty and exclusion are among the factors which continue to generate tensions involving communities, private individuals, industry and the private sector, as well as municipal and other government institutions.

Furthermore, Q'eqchi' Indigenous and peasant communities have faced decades of evictions, violence and limited opportunities for effective dialogue with the State. These dynamics have eroded institutional trust, weakened social fabric and created conditions of latent and recurrent conflict, with direct impacts on food security, social cohesion and territorial governance. Many of these communities suffering evictions from land have been granted precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).

OBJECTIVES

To contribute to peace consolidation and responsible land governance in the Polochic Valley by strengthening institutional, community and intersectoral coordination capacities for the prevention, management and peaceful transformation of agrarian, social and environmental conflicts in Alta Verapaz and Izabal.

KEY IMPACT AND RESULTS

The PBF Polochic Valley project implemented by FAO, OHCHR and WFP (until 2023), has strengthened institutional capacities and territorial governance mechanisms for the prevention and management of agrarian conflict in the Polochic Valley, contributing to an 80% reduction in the average number of conflicts in the Polochic Valley in 2023 (compared to the number of conflicts projected to have occurred in the absence of the project) and in the perception of violence as an effective means of conflict resolution.

Since 2022 the project has worked with the Presidential Peace and Human Rights Commission, COPADEH, and via this institution multiple other state institutions (nationally and locally) in the agrarian, environmental, social and justice sectors, building capacities for preventative and peaceful management of conflicts (such as integral analysis, dialogue and mediation skills) and supporting inter-institutional coordination in dialogue spaces at the departmental and municipal levels. Since 2024, the project has, in addition, improved COPADEH's procedures for assessing – and articulating responses to – the human rights situation in communities experiencing land conflicts and subject to precautionary measures of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, recognizing the centrality of human rights to addressing root causes and sustaining peace.

Municipal conflict resolution commissions in La Tinta, Senahu, Panzos and El Estor have been supported via training and the development of Municipal Strategies and Workplans for conflict prevention and management and in Izabal, a new Departmental Policy for Conflict Prevention and Management was developed with support of the project in October 2025. Furthermore, community leaders' capacities in land governance, conflict prevention and resolution have been strengthened, leading to more informed and meaningful participation and a reduction in their perception of violence as an effective means of conflict resolution. Community representatives confirm that this is reducing tensions related to access and use of land, and to building greater trust in dialogue processes with authorities.

CATALYTIC EFFECTS

Financial catalytic effects An additional USD \$94,547.50 in complementary financial resources were mobilized by the WFP to provide cash transfers to 641 families from five communities in the Polochic Valley to mitigate crop losses and other damage to livelihoods caused by Hurricane Julia. The transfers—equivalent to Q 1,180.00 per family—supported the purchase of agricultural inputs and food.

Non-financial catalytic effects The project generated significant non-financial catalytic effects by removing long-standing institutional barriers in the management of agrarian conflict. Joint work with COPADEH and other institutions enabled the review and updating of conflict analysis and management tools, clarifying mandates, referral pathways and prioritization criteria, and reducing institutional fragmentation. The creation and strengthening of territorial peace infrastructures, including cultural mediator committees, the validation of inter-institutional planning instruments, and the articulation of multiple institutions in evidence-based action plans have consolidated local networks for dialogue and mediation that extend beyond the project's time horizon. These advances strengthen community participation as a reference for future agrarian and food and nutrition security public policies and amplify the strategic impact of the PBF in the territory.

Voices from the Field

"For years we lived in fear of new evictions, without knowing where to turn. Through the project we learned that we have rights and that we are not alone. Today we see institutions approaching and engaging in dialogue with us, and we maintain hope of finding a dignified solution to our land situation." **Tomás Pop, Paraná community, Panzós, Alta Verapaz.**

"Before, conflicts were addressed in a disorganized way or by waiting for someone from outside to intervene. Now we have clear roles and are recognized for helping to resolve conflicts with respect and without violence." **Doris Beb, Secretary of the Cultural Mediators Committee, San Miguel Qotoxha community, El Estor, Izabal.**

"The participatory analysis allowed us to understand that behind each case file there are entire communities waiting for a solution. Today we have greater clarity on how to coordinate with other institutions and to assume our responsibility as the State." **Participant in the inter-institutional synergies workshop, COPADEH.**