

New hope for rural communities: growing food for the future

Honduras **direct** funding target: £160,000

For poor families in rural Honduras, finding secure employment and enough money to pay for basic needs is an everyday struggle. Small-scale farming is one of the few ways that people can escape the cycle of poverty, by growing enough food to eat and enough to sell to earn an income. By supporting farming projects in the country, Oxfam is working to improve living conditions for Honduran communities – now and in the future.

This is the first year of a three year project. We plan to spend similar amounts in the second and third years, building on and continuing the activities of the first year.



Felipe Hernandez Agulier spreads coffee beans out to dry in the sun in Caracol, Honduras. © Gilvan Barreto/Oxfam

The Project

Together with our partners, we have seen first hand how small-scale sustainable agriculture can make a big difference to the lives of poor rural communities. By farming small plots of land, people can ensure that they have enough food to eat and to earn a regular income from the sale of crops in local markets. This can mean that children have regular meals and are able to attend school. It can also reduce ‘distress migration’, whereby individuals feel impelled to go to the cities to seek a living.

Project aims

Working with our partner OCDIH, we aim to improve the livelihoods, incomes, and food security of people living in the four municipalities that make up Cerro Azul. As well as supporting farmers in the use of sustainable organic methods, this means helping to improve people’s access to markets, enhancing their entrepreneurial skills, and aiding their efforts to become more competitive. These communities are poor and socially marginalised, and people typically have few job

opportunities. Small-scale farming offers a route out of poverty, and a way for people to build a better life for their families.

We will give special attention to women, who are often the most marginalised members of these communities, and to young people, so that they can become proponents for change in the rural sector.

And the project will ensure that agricultural practices are used which protect the area’s natural resources.

Supporters, communities, local partners and Oxfam – working together to change lives

Background



Maria Fausta Castañeda and Jose Antonio Hernandez in their kitchen, Copan, Honduras
© Gilvan Barreto/Oxfam

Honduras is the third poorest country in Latin America and over 40 per cent of the population survives on less than two dollars a day. There are high levels of malnutrition and disease, especially among children, and the standard of housing is poor. Basic services, such

as health care and education, are under-funded and 50 per cent of people are unable to read or write.

Rural areas are the most impoverished. Unfair public policies have made it very difficult for people in rural communities to earn a decent living and work their way out of poverty.

To make matters worse, Honduras is highly vulnerable to hurricanes and tropical storms. A devastating example was Hurricane Mitch, which struck in 1998. The disaster destroyed 70 per cent of Honduras' crops and 5,600 people died. This was particularly catastrophic for poor rural communities who mostly earn a living through farming. People were made even more vulnerable and were plunged into even deeper levels of poverty.

Agricultural productivity is currently low, and cheap, imported goods are flooding local markets. The price of these goods, many of which are heavily subsidised by the producers' governments, makes it difficult for local, small-scale farmers to compete. This has led to many people migrating to large cities in search of work, causing the breakdown of rural communities ('distress migration').

Oxfam is working together with its partners, in rural communities in Cerro Azul, Copan, in west Honduras to help people change their lives and improve their chances of earning a better and sustainable living through small-scale farming. The project is part of a ten-year plan, building on Oxfam's experience in the region.

The Plan

To ensure that these rural communities are able to farm in a sustainable, successful and profitable way, people need to be supported so that they can make the best use of the land and the produce they cultivate. This project will help small-scale producers to access assets and services such as land, credit, irrigation and markets. We will also support the development of small businesses to help farmers market their products more effectively.

Activities

We will work with men and women in Cerro Azul to help them to get the most out of their farming. We will:

- Establish family gardens to grow fruit and vegetables.

- Train farmers to grow a diverse range of fruit and vegetable crops using organic methods.
- Provide them with the tools, seeds, resources and support necessary to establish a family garden close to their homes, improve yields and make organic compost, ensuring healthy and fertile soil.
- Set up grain and seed reserves so that both are available when food is scarce during droughts and after natural disasters.
- Establish 'drip' irrigation where needed, so water can be distributed efficiently and farmers can irrigate their crops using water that runs off from nearby mountains.
- Introduce micro-credit schemes, especially for women, who struggle to access money that could help to build their businesses.



Leonel, 6, and Jorge, 11, at a local coffee mill

- Improve marketing skills and set up farmers' markets to increase people's access to markets and goods.
- Empower people, especially women and young people, to lobby local municipal and national governments so that they do more to meet the needs of poor rural communities.

The Impact

The project will directly benefit 6,435 men and women, from 1,286 families in the four municipalities that make up Cerro Azul.

- Farmers will have higher yields, ensuring that their families have enough food, and that they have produce to sell.
- Farm land will be increasingly healthy and fertile, ensuring good crop yields now and in the future.
- Families will grow and eat more healthy and nutritious food.
- More people will have access to land, credit and the training they

need to set up small businesses and earn a sustainable income.

- More people will be able to take their produce to market, and be paid a fair price.
- Fewer people will migrate from rural areas, which will prevent the further breakdown of these communities.
- More people will be empowered to lobby municipal and national government bodies for better services and fairer policies.

Monitoring and evaluation

Quarterly and annual reports are produced, and include input from partner organisations and from beneficiaries of the project. A full, external audit is carried out every five years.

Sustainability

Since the beginning, a key aim of the project has been to increase the capacity of local organisations, village committees and civil society networks, so that the work of the project can continue long after Oxfam's involvement has ended.

The People



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© Annie Bungeroth/Oxfam

Now that we sell our vegetables we have an income

"With the money I made I bought things for the kitchen; sugar and soap for the laundry. We save any extra money to fix the house. Now that we sell our vegetables and have an income we can do this. We're selling more and more. There are pick-up trucks that take us to the market. I usually stay at the market until I've sold everything."

*Maria Fausta
Castañeda, 42*

We have much better nutrition

"Life was pretty tight. We lived in extreme poverty and sometimes all we could eat was corn. With the vegetable gardens we have much better nutrition. OCDIH taught me everything and now I teach our community, here in my garden. My motivation is my children. My greatest hope is to have all of them in schools; what really drives me is their future and happiness."

*Angelina Munguia, 50,
Agricultural Technician*

We're beginning to see a change

"I work in the fields everyday with my sons. We keep part of the harvest and sell the rest; you need to have an income. OCDIH have helped us to improve our standard of life. Our lives are difficult; poverty is the biggest problem in Honduras. Before we just hoped things would improve. Now we are beginning to see a change. Soon we will have something good to eat all year round."

Miguel Pineda, 55

The Partner

"In the future, perhaps in a year's time, the community will be able to grow vegetables on a much larger scale, producing enough to trade. We're training people about where they might sell their goods and what challenges they might face. One of the goals we have is to improve housing and we're hoping that the municipalities will support this kind of project. Another thing we hope to achieve is for the community to legally own the land as they still don't have the deeds."

*Dorise Velasquez, Project Officer
OCDIH*

OCDIH is an Honduran NGO which focuses on training and development in rural and urban communities.

About **direct**

By supporting **direct projects** you're joining a global network of supporters, local people and partner organisations, all working with Oxfam to end poverty and suffering for good. From helping whole communities to protect themselves against disaster, to working with national governments to transform a country's schools, to helping individual families to earn a living, all **direct projects** offer you the chance to change lives.

Our commitment to you:

- On hundred per cent of your money is invested in your chosen project.
- You'll receive 6 and 12 month progress reports on your project.
- Email alerts when new information is posted on the website.
- A dedicated account manager to answer questions and keep you informed.

Other countries needing your support

Albania, Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Honduras, India, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Nepal, Philippines, Peru, Sudan, Tanzania.

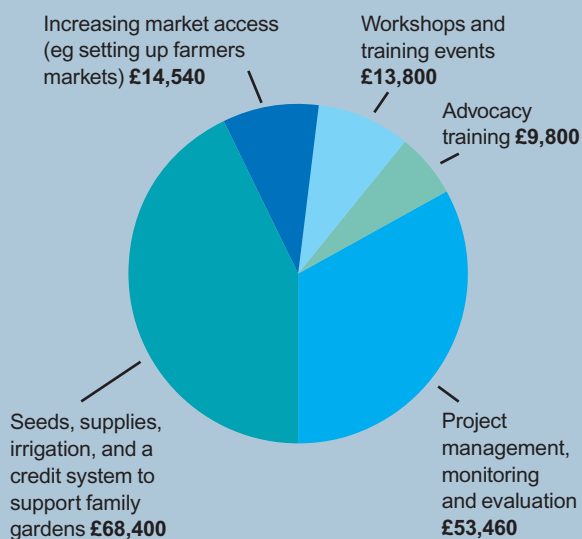
The Budget

Your money will pay for:

- Seeds, supplies, irrigation, and a credit system to support family gardens
- Workshops and training events
- Increasing market access (e.g. setting up farmers markets)
- Advocacy training
- Project management, monitoring and evaluation

How we'll spend your money:

Total £160,000



Honduras: country profile



Population	7.5 million
Life expectancy at birth	69 years
Development	117th (of 177) on the HDI ¹
GDP per capita	\$2,800 (UK GDP per capita \$30,821)
Percentage of population living on less than \$1 a day	21%
Percentage of population living on less than \$2 a day	44%
Percentage of population undernourished	22%
Percentage of children under-weight for their age	17%
Percentage of GDP accounted for by agriculture	14%
Percentage of the total workforce employed in agriculture	36%*

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2006 except * which is from the Economist Intelligence Unit 2006.

¹ The UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: life expectancy, education and standard of living.

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