Central America
Flyer – Fall 2022

CIPE Overview

Populations in Central America are growing more quickly than the Latin America regional average. However, this trend isn’t translating into enough economic development and job creation. Corruption and the lack of sustained public policies by governments contributed to an overall lack of economic opportunities, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. For example, the Northern Triangle faces widespread corruption and citizen disengagement, and a lack of economic opportunities is forcing people to leave. CIPE is addressing the economic and governance challenges in the region through bold, community-led, and creative projects that engage and connect women entrepreneurs, youth, the indigenous business sector and political institutions to help build a culture of democracy and economic opportunities. These initiatives are tackling some of the root causes of migration by helping support entrepreneurs in their communities and empowering local civil society and the private sector to drive much needed reforms.

Promoting Women’s Economic Empowerment

Women across Central America face many barriers to their economic participation and inclusion. CIPE is implementing cutting-edge women’s economic empowerment programs to change that.

In Quetzaltenango, Guatemala CIPE established a Women’s Business Resource Center (“CORALI”) to provide a safe, physical space where women can grow their business skills without harassment. CIPE is also supporting a local women’s business network to encourage greater participation and leadership among women in the private sector.

CIPE is working closely with women’s business associations in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala to increase their capacity to advocate for women’s economic inclusion and generate access to new markets for their members.

“I hope that Corali keeps being a guide for me to grow my business, to be a woman entrepreneur, and to help other women just like me who are at home wanting to pursue opportunities and have not been able to.”

– Guadalupe, Corali Alumni
Encouraging Youth Entrepreneurship

Since 2016, CIPE and the National Network of Managers' Groups (RNGG) have been implementing the Xelajú Naranja project to support youth entrepreneurs in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. The program supports entrepreneurial talent among youth in the creative economy, also referred to as the “Orange Economy.” CIPE also supports the Xelajú Naranja Consortium, a group of entrepreneurs, civil society leaders, and local authorities interested in fostering the creative economy ecosystem in their community.

CIPE successfully replicated Xelajú Naranja in two communities in Guatemala and one in El Salvador. The new project (Colmena Naranja) aims to provide technical support for creative sector entrepreneurs, improve the orange economy, and strengthen regional democratic participation among creative entrepreneurs.

Strengthening Democracy and Transparency

In 2022, CIPE established a pilot regional think tank network alongside its local partners, the National Economic Research Center (CIEN) in Guatemala and Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUSADES) in El Salvador.

The goal of the network is to develop opportunities for regional integration through strengthened cooperation among think tanks in Central America. Through collaboration, the think tanks will scale up capacity to advocate for economic reform, government modernization, transparency, and an improved digital and regulatory ecosystems.