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Request for Information (RFI)

RFI Issue Date: June 28, 2013

Solicitation Number: RFI-520-13-000004 Sustainable Economic Observatory Project

Response Due: **Friday, July 26, 2013**

Attention: guatemalaproposals@usaid.gov

This is a Request for Information. This is not a Request for Application (RFA) and is not to be construed as a commitment by the U.S. Government to issue any solicitation or ultimately award any grant on the basis of this RFI, or to pay for any information submitted as a result of this request. If any subsequent application for agreement is released it will be synopsisized in <http://grants.gov/>. It is the potential applicant's responsibility to monitor the site for the release of any further information or solicitation. USAID/Guatemala will not provide answers to any questions submitted in response to this RFI; proprietary information should not be sent.

This Request for Information (RFI) seeks to obtain information about interests, capabilities and market information related to the enclosed draft Concept Paper entitled "Sustainable Economic Observatory Project" in order to inform the design of a future mechanism to provide these services to USAID/Guatemala. This RFI is open for comments from any interested local and international (U.S. and other countries) organizations.

Information Requested: The information USAID/Guatemala is seeking from the public for the RFI is as follows:

1. Comments on Draft Outline Concept Paper

To assist in the efficiency of this process, please consider the following in preparing your input:

- Ensure your comments are concise and specific to information included within the draft Outline Concept Paper,
- Ensure submitted comments make specific reference to page and section numbers, and
- Give special consideration to the following questions:
 - Comment on technical feasibility of the proposed development methodology/model,
 - What, if any, data inputs beyond those articulated in the concept paper would be necessary for generating a functional model?
 - Based upon prior model and applied tool kit development experience, what challenges and contingencies should be considered?

- What alternative approaches might be considered in order to accomplish the same objectives?

2. Statement of interest

Please note that if USAID decides on releasing a Request for Application (RFA) in connection to the concept paper, a consolidation of submissions and questions to the RFI might be made public either before the RFA or as an annex to the RFA. Contributors' information will remain anonymous to the public.

This RFI will be open from the date of release through July 26, 2013. Please send all responses to this RFI via email to guatemalaproposals@usaid.gov

Comments/Questions

Comments and questions regarding this announcement must be submitted in writing by e-mail to guatemalaproposals@usaid.gov. Verbal comments/questions will NOT be accepted. USAID will not be responding to comments/questions based on this RFI.

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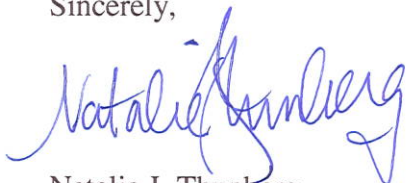
This announcement is not to be construed as a commitment by the U.S. Government to issue any solicitation, funding opportunity or ultimately an award on the basis of this RFI, or to pay for any information submitted as a result of this request. It should be noted that responding to this RFI will not give any advantage to any organization in any subsequent procurements. USAID may use any information provided as part of your submission without incurring any obligation. Please note that USAID is not seeking technical or cost applications at this time. Do not submit a full application/proposal. Only the information requested above will be considered.

Issuance of this notice does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the government to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation of comments. Also, USAID/Guatemala reserves the right to or not to incorporate any and all comments into an RFA.

USAID does not guarantee that comments/questions received after July 26, 2013 will be taken into consideration.

Submissions become United States (U.S.) Government property and will not be returned. Thank you for your assistance and interest in USAID/Guatemala projects.

Sincerely,



Natalie J. Thunberg
Regional Contracting Officer
USAID/El Salvador

CONCEPT PAPER

Sustainable Economic Observatory Project

1. Overview

It is important that civil society organizations become more effectively engaged in the process of developing and implementing sustainable economic policies, fostering more publicity to the development agenda. The UNDP recognized that “meeting development goals in today’s world requires a clear understanding where obstacles to these goals lie, and how they can best be bypassed. The debates contributing to this understanding should not be limited only to the halls of power or the corridors of bilateral and multilateral organizations”¹.

In recent years Guatemala has been facing major external shocks, including food, fuel and financial crises, followed by economic crisis. Also important, the challenges of global climate change (GCC) put Guatemala on a lower path of growth and in a cycle of higher vulnerability and poverty. The Guatemalan economy overall has performed adequately during recent decades. A relatively stable macroeconomic management enabled an annual average growth of 4.2 percent between 2004 and 2007, reaching the pick of 6.3 percent in 2007, with per capita GDP up by 3.7 percent and foreign direct investment (FDI) up by 26 percent. However, the global financial crisis, followed by an economic crisis, declined GDP growth to 0.5 percent in 2009². Surges in demand for exports lessen the impact of the crisis, but Guatemala’s vulnerability to natural disasters affected the economic growth in 2010. Economic activity surged by 4.3 percent in 2011 and decelerated to 3 percent in 2012. International Monetary Fund (IMF) projection indicates that growth is expected to continue solid while converging to trend, increasing to 3.5 percent in 2013 and 2014³.

Though this nascent recovery is promising, Guatemala continues to face relatively high population growth that erodes much of the benefits of GDP growth. Not all Guatemalan economic sectors participate equally in the benefits that derive from the country’s economic growth⁴. Total and extreme poverty continues to prevail in rural areas of the country, particularly in the Western Highlands regions with a high concentration of indigenous people. Guatemala was able to reduce poverty from 56 per cent in 2000 to 51 percent in 2006; however poverty rose again to 53.7 percent in 2011. Sustained growth over many years will be required for benefits to reach the country’s most vulnerable groups and to reduce poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

Agriculture is the economic base for much of the country’s employment and critical to sustainable food security. Agriculture can also be viewed as the most important potential driver of future economic growth. Investment in local capacity to provide for public and private sector

¹ Remarks by Rebeca Grynspan, Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, at the 16th Annual International Development Conference, Harvard University “Towards Sustainable Development and Growth: Addressing Today’s Challenges”, April 2010.

² International Monetary Fund (IMF) – World Economic Outlook (WEO) database, April 2013.

³ International Monetary Fund (IMF): Guatemala –Concluding Statement of the 2013 Article IV Mission, May 20, 2013.

⁴ The Gini Index for Guatemala, a recognized measure of inequality, has been relatively high 2002: 55.13; 2000: 54.97; 1998: 55.65; 1989: 59.6; 1987: 58.26 (www.nationmaster.com). The U.S. figures have been 2007: 45; 1997: 40.8; and for Spain 2005: 32; 1990: 32.5 (CIA World Factbook)

development is an urgent need.⁵ With few exceptions, no country has alleviated poverty and hunger without developing its agriculture sector.⁶

The USAID/Guatemala Economic Growth Program focuses on two United States Government (USG) Presidential Initiatives, Feed the Future (FtF) and Global Climate Change (GCC).

- **Feed the Future (FtF):** Guatemala is one of the 20 countries in the world that are part of the Presidential Initiative “Feed the Future”, aimed to reduce poverty and chronic malnutrition, through health, nutrition and income generation activities. USAID/Guatemala is leading the USG-wide (FtF) Initiative to help the GOG to reduce entrenched poverty and chronic malnutrition through support for agriculture-led rural development as an engine for broader economic growth and for combating food insecurity. As mandated by the FtF Initiative, USAID, with participation of other USG agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Peace Corps, are supporting the GOG efforts to reduce poverty and increase food security⁷. The focus of USG FtF-related projects and programs is on the geographic area of five Western Highlands Departments of Quetzaltenango, Quiché, Huehuetenango, San Marcos, and Totonicapán where poverty and malnutrition are notably predominant.

USAID/Guatemala support through the Sustainable Economic Observatory (SEO) Project will, in part, build capacity within civil society organizations to study, monitor, and advocate for sustained and focused GOG commitment to develop and implement economic policies necessary for achieving its food security national strategy targets.

- **Global Climate Change (GCC):** According to the USAID Climate Change and Development Strategy⁸, the goal of sustainable landscapes assistance is to support efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and land degradation and to enhance sequestration of carbon associated with sound land use and management, with a focus on forests and other priority ecosystems, such as peat bogs, wetlands, and agricultural lands. Under the GCC Initiative, the USG launched the Enhancing Capacity for Low Emission Development Strategies (EC-LEDS) program to support over 20 countries worldwide⁹. EC-LEDS is a USG-wide initiative managed by USAID and the U.S. Department of State, with participation of other USG agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Energy, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Guatemala is one of the six focus countries in Latin America to receive support for the development and implementation of the GOG Low Emission Development Strategy, which focuses on sustainable landscapes’ and contribute as well to the sustainability of the FtF Initiative’s poverty and malnutrition reduction objectives.

⁵ Barrios González, José Miguel and John Mellor, 2006. *Distribución sectorial del crecimiento del empleo en el altiplano guatemalteco*. Instituto de Agricultura, Recursos Naturales y Ambiente. Universidad Rafael Landívar. Guatemala City.

⁶ World Bank, 2008. *Agriculture for Development. World Development Report*, The World Bank, Washington, DC.

⁷ At the G-8 Summit in L’Aquila, Italy in July 2009, global leaders committed to “act with the scale and urgency needed to achieve sustainable global food security” and called for increased investment in agriculture and rural development to attain broader economic growth, prosperity and stability. The summit brought a new common approach, summarized in the five Rome Principles. Feed the Future (FTF), is the U.S. government’s global hunger and food security initiative, in response to the *L’Aquila Joint Statement on Global Food Security*. The *Rome Principles* established at L’Aquila are the same principles that guide the FTF strategy⁷: (1) Adopt a comprehensive approach to food security that focuses on advancing agriculture-led growth, reducing under-nutrition, and increasing the impact of humanitarian food assistance; (2) Invest in country-led plans; (3) Strengthen strategic coordination—globally, regionally, and locally; (4) Leverage the benefits of multilateral institutions; and (5) Deliver on a sustained and accountable commitment.

⁸ http://transition.usaid.gov/our_work/policy_planning_and_learning/documents/GCCS.pdf

⁹ <http://openEI.org/LEDS>

The SEO Project will build capacity within civil society organizations to study, monitor, and advocate for environmental issues linked to Global Climate Change and the Guatemalan Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS), in support to the USAID/Guatemala environmental programs.

Within USAID/Guatemala, the (SEO) Project is aligned with the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) from FY 2012-FY 2016¹⁰. Under the CDCS, the SEO Project supports Development Objective (DO) 2: Improved Levels of Economic Growth and Social Development in the Western Highlands; Intermediate Result (IR) 1: Broad based economic growth and food security improved. USAID will implement an integrated set of economic growth, food security, and local governance management to promote inclusive economic growth, poverty reduction and increased food security in municipalities with the highest rates of poverty and chronic malnutrition. The SEO project also supports DO3: Improved Management of Natural Resources to Mitigate Impacts of Global Climate Change. USAID will work with local communities and institutions to implement market-based strategies for the sustainable use of forest products and support local efforts on risk mitigation. At the same time, USAID will work with the GOG to promote and implement sustainable land use strategies, environmental management policies, and enforcement of regulations to improve environmental governance.

2. Country Context

- Food Security:** In 2005, the Government of Guatemala (GOG) approved legislation aimed at achieving nation-wide food security. The legislation also approved a Council for National Food Security (CONASAN) and its Secretariat for National Food Security (SESAN) to coordinate implementation of the government-wide Strategic Plan for National Food Security and Nutrition (PESAN 2009-2012). In partnership with local departmental and municipal government agencies and civil society groups –and with international donor support from USAID, the European Union, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Food Program– SESAN launched its first regional food security plan, the Western Highlands Food Security Plan (PLAN OCC), in April 2011. In November 2011 the GOG approved the PESAN 2012-2016, with five main objectives: Food availability, food accessibility, food consumption, food utilization, and coordination. In February 2012 the current GOG administration launched the “*Pacto Hambre Cero*” that called for the active and sustained involvement from all sectors of civil society working particularly in 166 municipalities nationwide, selected for their high rates of chronic malnutrition. The *Pacto Hambre Cero* integrates PLAN OCC, the Reduction of Chronic Malnutrition Strategy, and other GOG food security initiatives.

USAID/Guatemala assessments of Guatemala’s food security needs, placed “accessibility to food” – e.g., purchasing power to buy food - at the top of the list, due to high rates of extreme poverty, which reach up to 80% of households in some municipalities.¹¹ “Utilization” appears to be the second most important factor affecting food security in Guatemala, given chronic malnutrition among the country’s most vulnerable populations of children, particularly in

¹⁰ http://transition.usaid.gov/our_work/policy_planning_and_learning/documents/GuatemalaCDCS.pdf

¹¹ Jaime Carrera, Ottoniel Monterroso, and José Luis Jiménez, “Seguridad Alimentaria y Agricultura en Guatemala,” Abt Associates, USAID/Guatemala, Guatemala, Guatemala, 2009; and Roberta van Haften, “Confronting Food Insecurity in the LAC Region Under Rising Food Prices: A Framework for Action,” Chemonics International Inc., USAID/Washington, Washington, DC, 2008.

indigenous communities of the Western Highlands. These two PESAN components – “access” and “utilization” – form the thrust of the USG FtF Initiative in Guatemala to support PESAN implementation¹².

- Global Climate Change:** According to the United Nations, Guatemala is one of the ten countries most vulnerable to climate change in the world, and the fourth most vulnerable to natural disasters. It is located in the Atlantic hurricane path, the Pacific Southern Oscillation¹³ and the, so called, Pacific Ocean ‘Ring of Fire’, both of which expose Guatemala to considerable risk and damage from hurricanes, tropical storms and substantial and frequent droughts and floods, as well as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, that even not related to GCC occurred concurrently with climate change events and exacerbate their national level damages. In the past decade, Guatemala has been directly affected by a series of disasters, such as Hurricane Mitch in 1998, Tropical Storm Stan in 2005; and more recently, Tropical Storm Agatha in 2010 and Tropical Depression 12-E in 2011. In the area of sustainable landscapes, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from land use change, particularly deforestation and forest degradation, constitute a significant source of emissions for Guatemala¹⁴. Although a third of Guatemala is still covered by forests, annual deforestation for the last 10 years has been as high as 73,000 hectares, indicating that one of the key focus areas for reducing GHG emissions is reducing deforestation and forest degradation. Other important sources of emissions include transport, energy use and production (e.g., including burning of biomass including firewood and sugar cane), as well as industrial processes related to production of mineral products (e.g., cement, asphalt, glass).

The GOG signed the United Nations Convention on Climate Change in 1992 (ratified in 1995). Subsequently, the GOG made significant advances on the institutionalization and internalization of climate change issues in national planning, such as: (a) National Global Climate Change Policy of 2009¹⁵; (b) Creation of climate change units in several ministries and governmental entities; (c) A national global climate change agenda, which is being implemented through programs and projects. Related initiatives include the National Strategy for the Sustainable Production and Use of Firewood, 2013-2024¹⁶ and the new Energy Policy for 2013-2027¹⁷. Currently the USG is collaborating closely with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) and the Secretariat of the Presidency for Planning and Programming (SEGEPLAN) as the official points of contact in Guatemala for the development of its LEDS.

- Advancing the Sustainable Economic Agenda:** Where civil society has been actively involved with government agencies that provide public services, change has been significant and sustained, as well as responsive to the needs of beneficiaries. Two USAID-supported examples of such civil society engagement serve to demonstrate the importance and impact of this civil society engagement:

¹² <http://www.feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/country/strategies/files/GuatemalaFeedtheFutureMultiYearStrategy.pdf>

¹³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ENSO>

¹⁴ <http://www.marn.gob.gt/documentos/novedades/inventario.pdf>

¹⁵ http://www.segeplan.gob.gt/downloads/clearinghouse/politicas_publicas/Recursos%20Naturales/Politica%20Nacional%20de%20Cambio%20Clim%C3%A1tico%20Guatemala.pdf

¹⁶ The overall goal of the SEO Project is to contribute to the well-being and development of the people of Guatemala by strengthening civil society organizations and their constituents to contribute to public discourse and effectively engage them in the process of developing and implementing policies related to key development topics.

¹⁷ <http://www.mem.gob.gt/>

Health Observatory (OSAR): During the last 12 years USAID helped launch a GOG program of Women's reproductive health, addressing the lack of basic health services for women. The effort started with rigorous studies into the causes of high infant and maternal mortality rates in Guatemala. With national statistical data¹⁸ USAID worked with leaders in Guatemala's congress to secure approval for legislation that mandated GOG health centers to provide reproductive health services. Subsequent legislation funded the new reproductive health program through a tax on beverages making the program more sustainable. The outcomes are measureable reductions in infant mortality – a reduction from 48 to 38 deaths per thousand between 2002 and 2008/9 – among other positive impacts on expanding birth spacing and reducing chronic malnutrition. Other program outputs include: (1) a network of nearly 90 indigenous women's reproductive health groups (in 2010) in six rural departments¹⁹; and (2) representation of women on the local public health committees of municipal development councils (COMUDEs) that address advocacy for greater government health services for women and children. Now, through a Reproductive Health Observatory (OSAR), the USAID-sponsored program is working to expand the network of volunteer women's groups aimed at raising awareness of the availability of these services among still-to-be-reached potential beneficiary population. OSAR now supports efforts – through informal 'social monitoring' – to hold GOG entities responsible and accountable for implementing new reproductive health legislation and for using tax revenues as intended to expand the reach of these services to more remote and extreme poverty areas of the country.

Mesoamerica Famine Early Warning System (MFEWS): Early in its operation in Guatemala, the USAID-supported MFEWS program engaged Guatemalan government agencies and civil society organizations in fostering measures to address Guatemala's vulnerability to food production short-falls from climate and other economic factors. Such an engagement of civil society – particularly academic think tanks and NGO advocacy groups contributed in 2005 to approval of legislation aimed at achieving nation-wide food security in Guatemala. The legislation also allocated funding for CONASAN and SESAN to coordinate the National Food Security Plan (PESAN – 2009-2012) and currently PESAN 2012-2016, for eradication of food insecurity and malnutrition. PESAN has provided a framework and platform for engaging local civil society groups – particularly the local development councils at the Departmental (CODEDEs) and Municipal (COMUDEs) levels – in devising specific plans to meet the food security needs of their populations from the standpoints of: availability (production); access (incomes and employment); efficiency (nutrition) and stability (environmental and natural resource sustainability).

These examples of civil society engagement –OSAR and MFEWS–, share four features (the four "A's") in common as part of their civil society strategies for social change:

Analysis and articulation – Each of these efforts sponsored at their outset sound research and statistical verification of development deficiencies to demonstrate how those deficiencies affect vulnerable populations as well as what has worked well and why in reaching these populations with needed social services.

Awareness raising – Each has included broad dissemination of facts to raise awareness of the problem, and fostered an open and sustained communications and dialogue between civil society institutions and government decision-makers to enhance understanding of the impact of policy decisions on the poor, particularly the rural poor.

¹⁸ Encuesta Nacional de la Salud Materno Infantil, 1998/9, 2002 and 2008/9.

¹⁹ See www.alianmisa.org for more details about the National Alliance of Indigenous Women's Organizations for Reproductive Health.

Advocacy – Each has articulated and developed sustained pressure for action and change by mobilizing and organizing those other civil society groups or those directly affected, to collectively advocate for appropriate government action – policy, legislative and regulation reform, effective policy implementation and adequate funding;

Social Auditing – Each has introduced the concept of ‘social auditing’ and periodic vigilance of government actions through support to civil society groups – academia, NGO’s, the media – for monitoring government agencies to increase the likelihood that public programs under their mandates will be administered well and funds managed responsibly.

Environmental Observatory: In addition to those USAID/Guatemala funded initiatives mentioned above, Rafael Landívar and San Carlos universities partnered, with Dutch funding support, to launch in March 2011 an Environmental Observatory, which has focused its efforts on natural disaster mitigation, and the outgrowth of an extensive environmental assessment also conducted with Dutch funding.

These initiatives demonstrate the progress that Guatemala’s civil society is making toward organizing and engaging stakeholders in the deliberations and decisions affecting their lives. The proposed Sustainable Economic Observatory will add to the robustness of that engagement, by focusing attention on the economic impact –positive and negative– that GOG policies would have on the welfare of the population at the national level and at different segments, such as the poorest rural population. USAID/Guatemala looks to the SEOP to pursue the same analysis-awareness-advocacy-auditing’ process critical to assuring that stakeholders actions and opinions regarding the country’s economic and social development are statistically well-founded, and adequately articulated to assure government initiatives are appropriately crafted by law-makers and responsibly administered by civil servants.

3. GOAL of the Project

The Project will respond to the need for USAID/Guatemala, through the Economic Growth Office (EGO), to have an advocacy and dissemination capability able to voice independent opinions to promote sustainable economic growth. The project will identify ways to promote participatory processes with the private sector and civil society organizations, and to collaborate with the Government of Guatemala institutions and USAID/Guatemala programs involved in the implementation of the FtF and GCC initiatives to achieve the goals of reducing poverty and chronic malnutrition, and to improve the environment and biodiversity protection. USAID assistance will help to create a Sustainable Economic Observatory with membership and participation from key civil society sectors – academia, producer or trade associations, the media, private consulting firms and ‘think-tank’ organizations. USAID would expect for-profit business enterprises be involved in the project contributing with funding to work together on their social investment agenda.. The SEO project aims to give voice and influence to Guatemalan civil society for advocating the sustained advancement of GOG initiatives, such as reducing poverty, hunger, malnutrition and environmental vulnerability to climatic events in Guatemala.

Based on this general goal, the following components have been identified. Respondents may add other objectives/components that contribute to attain the overall goal:

(a) Establish a Sustainable Economic Observatory, including a plan for self-sustainability beyond the five years period of the project implementation.

(b) Advance discussion and provide information on key development topics:

- Food Security
- Agriculture Sector Development
- Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation
- Competitiveness and Business Enabling Environment

(c) Build capacity of civil society organizations and their constituents: This objective aims to contribute to public discourse on the above topics and open up and expand opportunities through which civil society can participate in dialogue on and analysis of development issues.

4. Illustrative Activities:

This section describes the illustrative activities that might be carried out. Responses/comments are encouraged to suggest alternative activities for implementing the approach outlined in this draft Concept Paper.

(a) Establish a Sustainable Economic Observatory (SEO). This component will focus on set-up a SEO with appropriate partnering arrangements in place to ensure continuity after the life of the project. To be able to address the diversity of topics that will be part of the SEO agenda, more than one partnership with civil society institutions (academia, think tanks, research Institutes, etc.) are encouraged.

Illustrative Activities may include:

Establish by-laws, membership requirements and operating procedures for a new Sustainable Economic Observatory.

Identify important gaps in understanding the impacts of economic and environmental policies and events that will be the base to develop the SEO agenda.

Identify capable and objective (non-political) partners in sustainable economic development areas that complement the recipient's own areas of expertise and with which it could partner in administering the SEO Project.

Set up contracting or partnering mechanisms to conduct research and analysis on the impact of economic and environmental policies/events, especially on FtF and GCC areas.

Establish strategic private and public alliances to address the SEO Project topics and objectives.

Identify and initiate linkages between the SEO and an existing entity that can sustain the Project beyond the five years period of planned USAID assistance.

(b) Advance discussion and provide information on key development topics: Frequently development work does not always receive the attention that other issues do, but it is certainly important; so a larger space must be created to advance open public discourse on these issues. Policies are proposed, programs are designed, and legislation drafted without a comprehensive assessment of their relative impact on socio-economic groups that could be directly or indirectly

affected. Particularly overlooked is how the livelihoods and welfare of the population and specific groups are impacted. The project aims to find the ways to promote discussion and provide information on the following topics:

- Food Security
 - Behavioral change to improve household nutrition
 - Water, sanitation and hygiene
 - Household income generation
- Agriculture Sector Development
 - Factors and inputs for increasing agricultural production
 - Post-harvest processing and storage
 - Climate change impacts on crop production
 - Integrating agricultural and environmental strategies
 - Potentially foreseen nationwide agriculture problems and their medium and long term solutions and adaptation measures²⁰
- Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation
 - Climate change policy
 - Low Emissions Development Strategy (LEDS)
 - Energy conservation, alternative sources of energy
 - Community forestry concessions
 - Adaptation to climate change
- Competitiveness and Business Enabling Environment
 - Ease of starting a business
 - Investment climate
 - Incentives and disincentives to expanded participation in the formal economy
 - Trade facilitation

Illustrative Activities may include:

Develop memoranda of understanding or sub-contracts with research partners and independent researches to carry out SEO issues research agenda.

Conduct studies and review relevant draft legislation or policies to determine their potential –positive and/or negative– impact on the livelihoods of the population, especially in rural areas.

Disseminate statistics on the status of rural population in the FTF zone of influence and other specific groups, as well as on Government of Guatemala (GOG) programs to improve their livelihoods.

²⁰ For example: Coffee rust emergency is no longer an emergency but a nationwide impacts problem that require medium and long term solution.

Conduct open forums that engage lawmakers, administrators, private sector and civil society in discussions related to SEO research topics.

Provide a space for dialogue among civil society groups and between these groups and GOG representatives and lawmakers.

Create a permanent electronic (internet) space for the GOG, local governments, donors, civil society, academia, and the private sector to exchange technical and non-technical information related to the above mentioned topics.

(c) Build capacity of civil society organizations and their constituents: There is a greater chance that policy reform will be sustainable and effective when stakeholders are engaged directly in advocating for improved government efforts and in auditing (tracking) programs implementation to assure that the policy goals are being achieved. The SEO Project can assist this process through support to civil society organizations that serve as a voice for independent opinions regarding compliance with the legal framework.

Illustrative Activities may include:

Assist civil society organizations in carrying out public education, outreach, and communications via easily accessible print media, social media, and radio spots and programs, in Spanish and in indigenous languages.

Assist civil society groups in formulating and implementing advocacy activities in the media and in other venues –e.g., workshops, legislative hearings.

Conduct on-line discussions and attendee events to share information and engage GOG and civil society organizations together.

Develop mechanisms for civil society organizations to collect, analyze, and disseminate information and carry out social audits, regarding legal and policy commitments to poverty and hunger reduction; and to improve environment and biodiversity protection.

Provide technical guidance, and where appropriate logistical (e.g. radio, internet) support, to relevant stakeholder organizations –producer and labor organizations and related advocacy groups associations– for systematic monitoring of draft legislation and technical ministry budgeting, planning and administration of policies and programs affecting positively or negatively the economic and environmental conditions.

5. Geographic Focus

The Sustainable Economic Observatory (SEO) Project will focus its activities in support to the FtF initiative in Guatemala's Western Highlands region where the GOG, NGOs, USAID and other donors are coordinating and concentrating their assistance programs on reducing poverty and food insecurity and environmental vulnerability. Likewise, to support the GCC initiative, the Project will focus on the areas of environmental and biodiversity significance, such as the Maya Biosphere Reserve Petén, the Verapaces region, and the Sierra de Las Minas Biosphere Reserve. At the same time, the SEO will address national as well as local (regional) policies and programs concerning rural population and the environment.

6. Coordination and Synergy Work

USAID/Guatemala has been working with the Government of Guatemala to ensure coordinated and coherent delivery of its technical assistance to promote economic growth, improve food security, and improve management of natural resources to mitigate impacts of global climate change, through a series of different mechanisms. The SEO Project will support USAID's efforts to avoid duplication and to enhance synergies with other U.S. Government agencies/offices and other donor's initiatives related to advocacy and dissemination and, particularly voice independent opinions. This project aims to complement and support this effort by working together and in synergy with USAID implementing partners, in particular:

- (a) *USAID/Guatemala Rural Value Chains Project (RVCP) (2012-2017)*, part of the Feed the Future Initiative. Implementing partners: AGEXPORT and ANACAFE. RVCP focused on horticulture, coffee, and handicrafts value chains in the Western Highlands, as well as indirect support for adaptation. To expand the potential impacts of this program and to promote the integration of Feed the Future agricultural program activities with Global Climate Change, strong coordination with these programs is recommended.
- (b) *USAID/Guatemala Climate Nature and Communities in Guatemala (CNCG) (2013-2018)*: Cooperative Agreement implemented by Rainforest Alliance. This mechanism will work directly with the GOG to support the initial stages of LEDS in Guatemala, as well as on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+).
- (c) *USAID/Policy Regulatory Support Project (2011-2015)*: Contract implemented by Weidemann Associates, Inc. This project improves policies, procedures, and regulations in rural development, food security, trade, and the environment while building capacity in the Government of Guatemala's (GOG) institutions.
- (d) *USAID/Monitoring and Evaluation Program (2013-2017)*: Contract implemented by Devtech Systems Inc. Its objective is to coordinate project monitoring activities of Economic Growth office projects, other USAID offices and other USG agencies contributing to the implementation of the FtF and the GCC initiatives, to evaluate progress, impact and deliver actual results under the integrated whole-of-government and multi-sectorial approaches. This project contributes to the goals under the USAID Evaluation Policy.

Reference materials

- USAID/Guatemala Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS):
http://transition.usaid.gov/our_work/policy_planning_and_learning/documents/GuatemalaCDCS.pdf
- Guatemala, FY 2011-2015 FtF Multi-Year Strategy:
<http://www.feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/country/strategies/files/GuatemalaFeedtheFutureMultiYearStrategy.pdf>
- USG Enhancing Capacity for Low Emission Development Strategies (EC-LEDS):
<http://openEI.org/LEDS>
- Plan Estratégico de SAN – PESAN 2012-2016: www.sesan.gob.gt
- Política Nacional de Cambio Climático:
http://www.segeplan.gob.gt/downloads/clearinghouse/politicas_publicas/Recursos%20Naturales/Politica%20Nacional%20de%20Cambio%20Clim%C3%A1tico%20Guatemala.pdf