



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Indigenous Women Forge Local Economic Opportunities in Guatemala



Daniel Bailey / USAID Guatemala

Staff from USAID and AGEXPORT join association members at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the ADINA warehouse. In 2009, in the rural Western Highlands of Guatemala, the sisters of the Ixcoy family in the village of Patulup started a vegetable growers' association with their father, Julián. For years, Mr. Ixcoy had been following seasonal migration routes, working the coffee harvest in the first months of the year and the sugar harvest later in the year. This work took him to the Pacific coast, hundreds of miles away from his home.

Like many men and women in Guatemala's predominantly indigenous Western Highlands, where poverty and chronic malnutrition rates are the highest in the country, Mr. Ixcoy left his family and community to earn money to support his family during the lean months after their store of maize and beans were used up. The only time he spent at home was between the two migrations in order to plant and harvest his yearly crop of maize and beans. These long absences were difficult for his family and also dangerous: migrant workers often face theft and even physical assault while traveling.

Seeing the negative effects of migration on their village, the Ixcoy family wanted to create better opportunities for local villagers to increase their economic status without having to leave the community. Together, they forged the *Asociación de Desarrollo Integral Nueva Alianza* (the New Alliance Integrated Development Association, or ADINA), setting aside 8.75 hectares to work collectively growing snow peas and green beans for the export market to the United States and Europe. ADINA is women-led, with 40 women and 16 men (all of them indigenous K'iche Maya) comprising its membership.

Under the Feed the Future initiative, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supports extension services and training for members of the association in order to increase their yields while reducing inputs like pesticides and fertilizer. Since 2013, USAID has worked with the association to introduce new technologies, such as the use of plastic mulch to keep down weeds, reduce pesticide use and maintain soil moisture. ADINA members also learned sanitary harvest techniques, such as hand-washing when picking vegetables, wearing hairnets and using antibiotic alcohol gel. In the summer of 2014, ADINA members used their increased earnings, along with additional USAID support, to construct a new warehouse to safely store their freshly picked produce while waiting for transportation to a central packing facility.

Today, ADINA members sell their produce to a large vegetable exporting firm. The steady and increased income has meant economic stability year-round in this small village and has reduced the pressure for community members to migrate to other parts of the country or to the United States for seasonal work. Mr. Ixcoy, now in his late sixties, is proud to have helped his daughters forge more secure livelihoods in their home town.