



FINAL REPORT LANDSCALE PILOT IN GUATEMALA 2022

Solidaridad



LANDSCALE



**RAINFOREST
ALLIANCE**

THE TRIFINIO LANDSCAPE IN SOUTHWESTERN GUATEMALA: THE HISTORY, LESSONS LEARNED, CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES OF THE LANDSCALE PILOT PROJECT

FACILITATOR TEAM

MARIO RAFAEL RODRÍGUEZ

Senior Associate, LandScale
Rainforest Alliance

JOSÉ LUIS LÓPEZ

Palm oil program manager
Solidaridad Centroamérica,
México y El Caribe

ERICK OCHOA

LandScale Consultant
Rainforest Alliance

EDITORIAL TEAM

FERNANDO CASTILLO

Content

VANESSA ARITA

Writing and Style

GERBER SARAZÚA

Layout and Design

VALERY COHN

Content Editor

CONTENT

Introduction	4
Context of the Pilot Project	6
Environmental characteristics of the Trifinio landscape of the Southwest	7
Socioeconomic characteristics in the Trifinio landscape of the Southwest	8
History of the implementation of the LandScale pilot project in Guatemala	10
Evaluation of the Guatemala pilot using the LandScale tool	12
The South-west Trifinio Sustainable Development Plan	13
Positive impacts of implementing the LandScale pilot project in Guatemala	14
Challenges and possibilities of LandScale in Guatemala	18
Challenges of the pilot project	18
Challenges for LandScale in Guatemala	18
Future possibilities	20
Lessons learned	22
Final comments	23

INTRODUCTION









































LandScale, as a system to assess the sustainability of landscapes, was created from the experiences of different international actors who, noticing the importance of the landscape scale in ecological, social and productive processes, wanted to build a tool that would allow the performance of the landscape and its sustainability to be measured. It emerged in communication between the Rainforest Alliance (RA), Verra and CCBA¹, who came together to develop a market instrument that would measure said sustainability in different landscapes.




In this way, the global actors RA, Verra and Conservation International (CI), in collaboration with other partners such as IUCN, Solidaridad, Proforest, EcoAgriculturePartners, Community, Climate and Bio-

diversity Alliance (CCBA) and the Nature Conservancy Research Center (NCRC) designed LS as an initiative to generate improvements in landscape sustainability by making reliable information about sustainability available to decision makers.

LandScale, then, emerged as a standardized evaluation framework that would facilitate the measurement of the progress of different actions in the landscape towards the goals proposed by the actors and, in turn, link different financial resources. LandScale was designed with four pillars and a variable number of performance indicators that allow for a common language on landscape sustainability. They are relevant at a global level and, in turn, can be adapted to different landscapes and actors. [Figure 1]

FIGURE 1 Image of the pillars and indicators

Ecosistemas 	Bienestar Humano 	Gobernanza 	Producción 
Proteger y restaurar los ecosistemas naturales <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protección de los ecosistemas naturales  Conversión de los ecosistemas naturales  Degradación de los ecosistemas naturales  Restauración de los ecosistemas  Conectividad de los ecosistemas naturales  	Mejorar el nivel de vida, especialmente para los grupos vulnerables y marginados <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ingresos y bienes de los hogares  Salud y nutrición  Educación  Agua, saneamiento e higiene  Infraestructura básica  Vulnerabilidad  	Reconocer y proteger los derechos a la tierra y los recursos, y reducir los conflictos relacionados <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenencia de tierras  Conflictos de tierras  Tenencia de recursos  	Promover los sistemas de agricultura, agro silvicultura y arboricultura regenerativas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Productividad agrícola, agro silvicultura y en la arboricultura  Eficiencia en el uso de recursos en sistemas de agricultura, silvicultura y arboricultura  Adopción de prácticas de gestión sostenible de la tierra  Adopción de prácticas de gestión sostenible de residuos 
Proteger y recuperar la biodiversidad <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amenazas a las especies  Conversión del hábitat de la biodiversidad  Degradación del hábitat de la biodiversidad  Restauración del hábitat de la biodiversidad  Protección del hábitat de la biodiversidad  	Respetar, proteger y cumplir con los derechos humanos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trabajo infantil  Trabajo forzoso  Derechos de los trabajadores  Otros derechos humanos  	Promover la transparencia, participación, inclusión y coordinación en las políticas, la planificación y la gestión del uso de la tierra <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopción e implementación de planes de uso de las  Coordinación de los organismos gubernamentales con respecto a las políticas, la planificación y la gestión en el uso de la tierra  Participación e inclusión de los actores en las políticas, la planificación y la gestión de tierras  Illegalidad y corrupción relacionadas con las tierras y los recursos  	
Mantener y mejorar los servicios del ecosistema <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cantidad de agua  Calidad de agua  Fuentes y sumideros de GEI en el sector de la agricultura, silvicultura y otros usos de la tierra (AFOLU)  Salud del suelo  Otros servicios para el ecosistema  			

 Básico
 Dependiente del paisaje
 Opcional

¹ CCBA was a founding member of the LandScale secretariat, but later was replaced by Conservation International in 2020.

The pilot project to test the LandScale tool in Guatemala was led by RA and Solidaridad, institutions that have been present in Guatemala for a long time, both with different environmental and social projects and with certifications. Both institutions obtained resources to work on LandScale through the IKI-funded grant mentioned above and after an agreement, a synergy was generated in the implementation of the pilot project in the country.

This was developed in the so-called Trifinio del Suroccidente Project, a territory made up of municipalities that belong to the departments of Quetzaltenango, Retalhuleu and San Marcos. It occupies a total area of 1,707 km², equivalent to 170,750 hectares, in the middle and lower parts of the Ocosito, Naranjo and Suchiate river basins.

The LandScale pilot project currently has the following partners: Comunidad 31 de Julio (Municipality of La Blanca), Municipality of Champerico, National Institute of Forests, National Council of Protected Areas, Rainforest Alliance, Solidaridad, Grupo HAME, Agroamérica, Private Institute for Research on Climate Change, Ingenio Magdalena, and the Association of Private Natural Reserves of Guatemala.

This document presents the history behind the implementation of the LandScale pilot project in Guatemala, shows the results of the evaluation of the pillars and their indicators at the Trifinio level, as well as the result embodied in the landscape action plan. At the same time, it emphasizes the lessons learned during the implementation of the pilot project, highlights the strengths mentioned by the participating actors and makes visible the challenges and explores the possibilities of the tool in other areas of the country.

With the support of:



CONTEXT OF THE PILOT PROJECT

The pilot to use LandScale in Guatemala is in the southwestern part of the country in the municipalities of Coatepeque, La Blanca, Ocós, Champerico and Retalhuleu.

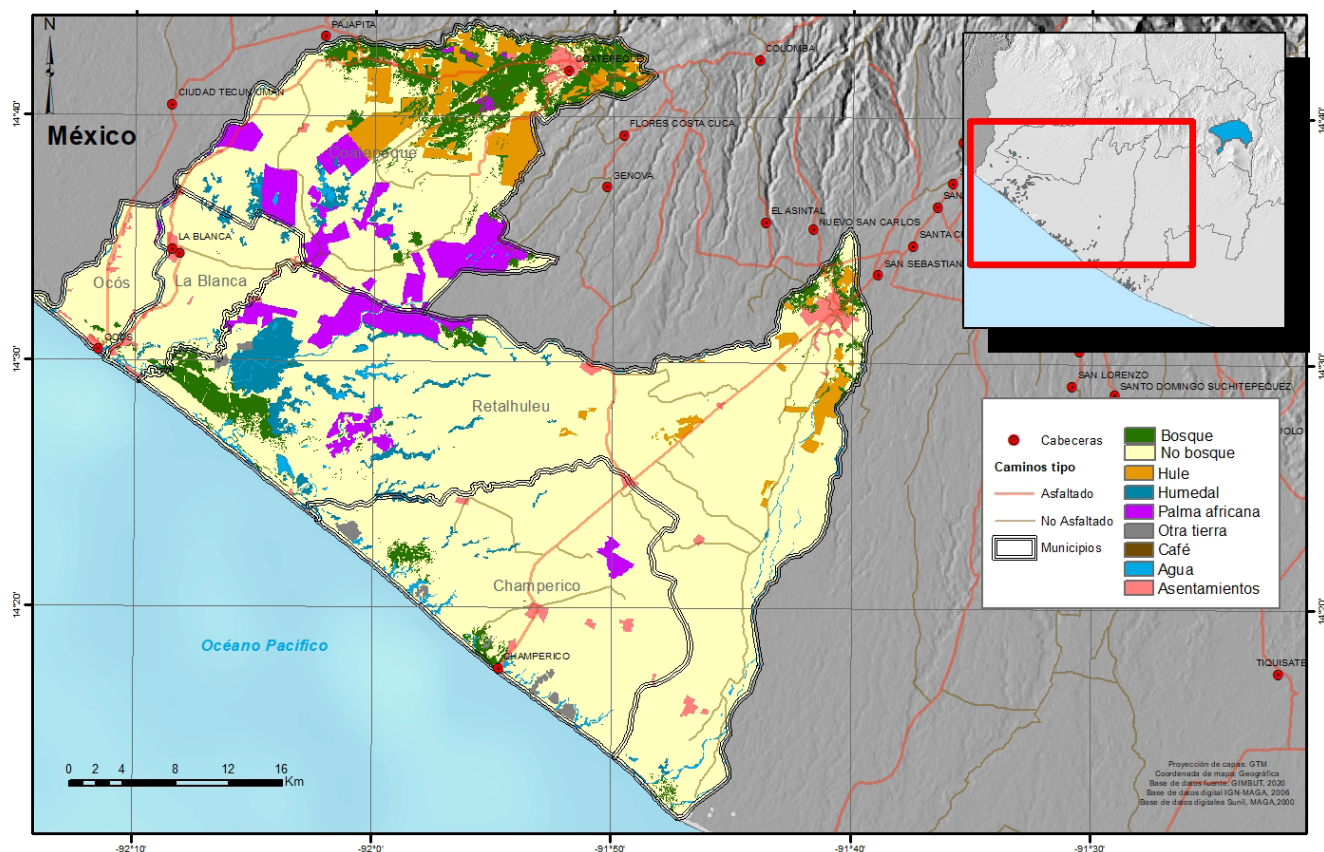


FIGURE 2. Location of the LandScale pilot



The pilot landscape is located on the South Coast of Guatemala. The South Coast has an extension of 254 linear km from the border with Mexico to the border with El Salvador, covering the territories of fifty municipalities in the departments of San Marcos, Quetzaltenango, Retalhuleu, Suchitepéquez, Escuintla, Santa Rosa and Jutiapa. It is found predominantly within the physiographic region called the Pacific Coastal Plain (MAGA, 2001), has high deposition of sediments? carried by rivers that flow down from the highlands.

On the Pacific slope, there are 14 basins with an drainage area of 20,652 km², which have less than 25% forest cover. One of the important forest types on the South Coast is the mangrove forest, which at the national level has a total extension of 25,089 ha (GIMBOT, 2014). Given its ecological importance, the mangrove swamp forests are of high importance in the South Coast, 66% of which is found in the departments of Escuintla, Retalhuleu, San Marcos and Suchitepéquez.

In socioeconomic terms, the South Coast has historically developed productive activities for agro-export. The favorable conditions of climate, soil fertility and water contributions originating in the volcanic chain were vital for the consolidation of these activities. As a result of this, a large property agro-export model has been consolidated that coexists with small commercial agriculture and peasant agriculture (SEGEPLAN, 2011).

In addition to the ecological conditions, the social and political conditions of the era led to the dominance of the production of coffee and sugar for export at the beginning of the 20th century. This agro-export model then expanded and shifted to focus on the cultivation of sugar cane, which caused transformations in land use, productive dynamics and land concentration. These transformations impacted and generated popular resistance to the dispossession of land and unfair conditions in the workplace (Gramajo, Ponciano and Vandeveire, 2016). Currently the South Coast is an area where livelihoods are typified as hiring labor for agribusiness, cultivation of basic grains and fishing activities.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRIFINIO LANDSCAPE OF THE SOUTHWEST

The pilot landscape presents similar geological conditions with sedimentary rocks of Quaternary alluvium. Only in the northernmost part of Coatepeque do other types of rocks of volcanic origin occur. The landscape is predominantly a floodplain with four large geomorphological landscapes: marsh areas, alluvial fans, flood surfaces, volcanic fillings.

Three basins converge in the territory. First, the basin of the Suchiate River, serving as a border between Guatemala and Mexico. Second, the Ocosito river basin is located in the western part of the South Coast. It is part of the departments of Quetzaltenango, Retalhuleu and San Marcos. And third, the Naranjo river basin is located in the western part of the South Coast. It is part of the departments of San Marcos and Quetzaltenango. The predominant climate is hot and humid with high rainfall, except for the microclimates that are formed in Coatepeque due to its relief and varied altitude.

The soils present in the territory, according to the world classification of soil resources (WRB, 2015), are vertisols and andosols type, there is a narrow strip of regosols. Natural vegetation such as forests is scarce (9% of the territory is forest) and is made up of remnants of mixed forests, broadleaves, gallery forests, and mangroves. The life zones identified in the LandScale pilot are the Subtropical Very Humid Forest (bmh-c), the Subtropical Humid Forest (bh-c) and the Subtropical Dry Forest (bs-c).

It is important to highlight that the pilot landscape covers one of the priority mangrove areas for the country, known as Manchón Guamuchal, housing the largest coastal marine wetland on the Pacific Coast of Guatemala spanning 13,942 ha. It is listed as a special protection area by CONAP (CONAP, 2010). It was declared a RAMSAR site in 1995, extolling its biological and ecological importance for the region, especially its mangrove forest covering 7,650 ha. It houses more than 400 species of animals, including fish, birds, mammals, reptiles and crustaceans. In short, it has high conservation value, is unique in the country, and deserves to be protected and preserved.



FIGURE 3. Aerial photograph of the Manchón.

SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS IN THE TRIFINIO LANDSCAPE OF THE SOUTHWEST

According to data from the last census (INE, 2019), the population consists of 268,688 inhabitants, of which 51% are women and 49% men. Coatepeque has the largest population (105,415 inhabitants), followed by Retalhuleu (90,505), while Champerico, Ocós and La Blanca have the lowest populations. In regards to extreme poverty, the municipalities have less than 5% of the population in a situation of extreme poverty, with the municipalities of Ocós and La Blanca having less than 1% (INE, 2016). In relation

to children in a situation of acute malnutrition, the municipalities show an annual average of less than 200 infants under 5 years of age for the period from 2012 to 2019 (MSPAS, 2021).

In respect to migration, the pilot landscape municipalities show low rates overall. Coatepeque with a very low priority in the Mobility Index, and low for La Blanca, Champerico and Retalhuleu. This shows that human mobility phenomena (transit, migration and displacement) are rare. In terms of quality of life, if we take the Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index (NBI), more than 65% of the inhabitants of La Blanca and Ocós suffer from material deprivation, followed by Coatepeque, Champerico and Retalhuleu. According to the marginalization index, La Blanca, Ocós and

Champerico are the ones with high values, followed by Coatepeque and Retalhuleu, with medium and low grade of marginization. Finally, using the human development index, we see how Retalhuleu, Coatepeque and Champerico present higher values, representing higher levels of development, than the municipalities of La Blanca and Ocos.

In the case of food insecurity, in a forecast for 2022, the municipality of Coatepeque has the minimum phase (households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without resorting to unconventional and unsustainable strategies to obtain food and income), and the rest, an accentuated phase (households have a minimally adequate food consumption but cannot afford certain essential non-food expenses without resorting to coping strategies for precariousness). Consequently, the municipalities of the pilot landscape have great challenges to overcome the socioeconomic shortcomings identified so far.

In relation to agricultural productivity, the crops with the largest presence in the landscape are sugar cane, covering 17% of the territory, banana-plantain with 7%, oil palm and rubber with 4%. All of these, with the exception of rubber, require irrigation throughout the year, mainly supplied by rivers in the area. In the case of private sector actors in the landscape, they have several certifications that support compliance with strict quality and sustainability standards in different areas, whether environmental, social or economic; for example: environmental risk management,

safe and sustainable production, prevention of food contamination, that its inputs come from certified forests and farms, food safety and industrial safety.

Among the main threats to the landscape are floods, river floods, fires, deforestation and drought. According to CONRED, all the municipalities in the landscape have areas with a very high risk of flooding. Other threats identified were forest fires, deforestation, plagues, illicit groups and ungovernability.

In the Trifinio landscape of the Southwest, the governance of the territory is based on a structure officially organized in 30 COCODES in La Blanca, 12 in Ocos, 22 in Coatepeque, 64 in Retalhuleu, and 61 in Champerico. The landscape and its municipalities have a municipal management score classified as medium and medium low or the year 2018 that measures indicators regarding the operation and compliance with the municipal powers established in the regulatory framework. This suggests that there are possibilities for improving municipal actions and plans.

Finally, in the territory there are other associations and committees that actively participate in the management of the means of production and natural ecosystems. We can mention among others: Local Roundtables of the Mangrove of the municipality of La Blanca, San Marcos, and Champerico, Retalhuleu; the La Blanca Irrigation Users Association, San Marcos; the Association for Comprehensive Development of the Trifinio Sur Oeste (ASODITSO); and the Ocosito River Technical Committee (COMCOSITO).



HISTORY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LANDSCALE PILOT PROJECT IN GUATEMALA

The starting point for the implementation of the LandScale pilot project in Guatemala was given in 2016, when Guatemala carried out an exercise to identify sites for the “IKI Addressing REDD+ through Landscape-Scale Sustainable Commodity Production Models (Landscape Standard (LS))” project. By then, the north of the country, in the department of Petén, was proposed, after a start-up workshop in Costa Rica. Later, additional areas considered were the Verapaces, the western Altiplano, as well as the South Coast. A series of criteria were used to evaluate the best option for that moment.

However, both the landscapes of Petén and the other regions were discarded for reasons of certifications, security, logistics and because in many landscapes only one raw material (commodity) was produced. Finally, it was decided to evaluate the South Coast, which presented interesting landscapes with raw materials such as sugar cane, banana, oil palm, rubber and mangrove as a conservation element. In addition, there were large companies, diverse communities, and a recognized institutional presence, such as INAB.

The team commissioned in Guatemala characterized all the active actors in the pilot landscape. After a series of methods (bibliographic review, workshops, interviews, observation) for the analysis and filtering of the actors, those that would be key to the promotion and implementation of the LandScale initiative on the South Coast were chosen, with which contacts and dialogues to prioritize and involve the key partners that have the initiative to participate in the implementation of the pilot project.

The delimitation of the landscape was carried out by the RA and Solidaridad team based on various criteria; This situation had to do with the presence of the mangrove as a unifying element, as well as the operational management of the “commodities” produced.

In the words of one actor:

“My operations [African palm, banana, plantain] cover from Coatepeque, that is, if we see it that way, I need them to include the municipality of Coatepeque and I also need them to include at least Ocós and La Blanca”
Gustavo Chacón Grupo HAME

The implementation by RA and Solidaridad had its ups and downs at the beginning, which were soon overcome by resolving organizational issues. This was reflected in the rapid progress that was being made with the different partners that were approached. At the same time, it made it possible to resolve an initial difficulty: many partners perceived the LandScale tool as just another certification mechanism and were reluctant to get involved in the project. As one actor mentions:

“The scheme was confusing, and people said: “No, RA, Solidaridad and VCS want to impose a new certification on us”
Alejandro Santos Rainforest Alliance

The strategy of approaching actors one by one was subsequently creating better results, by showing the advantages that getting involved in a project using the LandScale tool could have and observing which other actors were carrying out activities. An actor tells us about this process:

“The people of the project began to inform what their objectives were, what they wanted, etc., and there, little by little, the space was achieved (...) and to position themselves and execute activities. And when results began to appear, well, that favored a lot and they opened the door a little more”
Luis Vela INAB Regional

Making the scope of the LandScale Guatemala pilot clearly visible made other institutions join in the work, fundamentally because in environmental terms proposals were made that were complementary or similar to those of other key actors. As the ICC partner tells us:

“On the one hand, the project is aligned with the objectives of the ICC’s work on the restoration issue and, on the other hand, we share the territory of intervention”

Luis Reyes ICC

Towards the summer of 2019, the main actors carried out a first evaluation of the pilot in Guatemala using the LandScale tool from the available data for the basic and landscape-dependent indicators. The consultants searched for the data to be able to measure each optimal parameter, developed a data rating system, and evaluated the data series with that system. Version 0.1 of LandScale was used in the evaluation during 2019-2020 and it was found that, of the landscape-dependent indicators, 8 were applicable, 3 inconclusive and 3 not applicable.

With the rest of the indicators, including the basic ones and the optional ones, the partners collaborated in providing information for the parameters of each

chosen indicator. In the last evaluation of the tool, between March and July 2021, 16 indicators were finally chosen and, so far, now in 2022, the information is being added in version 0.2 of LandScale.

Sometimes there was no information to evaluate the indicators, and the actors took the initiative to obtain data by consulting with experts who generated ideas on how to measure some criteria based on the data provided. This was the case of child labor, for which the data did not exist as such and at the suggestion of experts it was decided to generate information that could indirectly estimate this indicator, following the guidelines provided by the annex 3 and 4 of the version V0.2 of the tool, Human rights assessment guidance and Enable conditions to human rights. On the other hand, the partners contributed to the extent possible with information to evaluate the chosen indicators. As one partner mentions:

“As far as I understand, there were no institutions that told him no. Because they worked with records, they worked with statistics, they worked with finances and everything (...)”

Silvia Valdés INAB Coatepeque

It is important to highlight that, during 2020, as some activities were carried out, the problem of the global



FIGURE 4. Meetings with partners.

COVID-19 pandemic began, which impacted the development of the LandScale pilot. A strategy was generated in the face of the pandemic emergency that consisted of holding meetings with the key actors at the virtual level and, later, when conditions permitted, other actors were visited. This made it possible that, even with the process advancing slowly, actions were carried out in different places of the landscape.

Based on retrospective planning, the different actors showed their dreams and aspirations for 2026 and subsequently the alignment of existing activities and potential for synergies were analyzed, which, favored by the possibility of having face-to-face meetings, culminated in the generation of the 2021-2026 territorial development plan -of the pilot landscape.

For this, the evaluation of the proposed indicators was key and allowed to find opportunities for alignment in the goals and actions to be carried out to improve the conditions of the landscape.

EVALUATION OF THE GUATEMALA PILOT USING THE LANDSCALE TOOL

The LandScale evaluation results were then used in the landscape action plan to define quantitative targets for the landscape goals, which can use the LandScale indicators to track progress towards these targets. The results of the pilot landscape evaluation applying the LandScale tool, show a territory with two indicators in the action plan in a strong state in pillars such as Ecosystems and Productivity. In the rest of the indicators of all the pillars, and in particular those of governance and human well-being, there is ample room for improvement in the coming years, with a view to the next evaluation in 2026.

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

- PILLARS:
- Ecosystems
 - Human well-being
 - Production
 - Governance

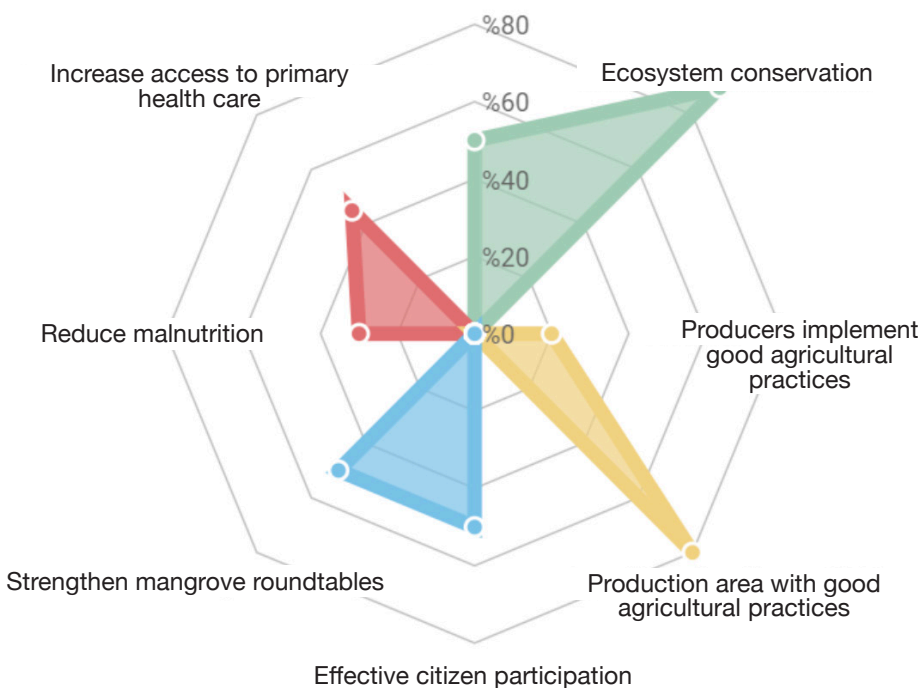


FIGURE 5: The Soth-west Trifinio Sustainable Development Plan



THE SOUTH-WEST TRIFINIO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This is the most palpable result of the implementation of the LandScale pilot in Guatemala. The goals agreed upon by the actors in the landscape are integrated into it, as a result of the continuous interaction and communication between them. The LandScale tool made visible the actions that were taking place and that were not known by all the actors. In the words of another landscape partner:

“[LandScale] has helped us make visible many of the actions that were carried out, which perhaps we felt were scattered, but now we have managed to align them to a strategy” Gustavo Chacón Grupo HAME



FIGURE 5. Cover of the Development Plan of the LandScale pilot in Guatemala

Common goals, shared dreams and similar visions are poured into this sustainable development plan, with clear and concrete actions. Although some may require more effort than others, the plan will guide the dynamics of landscape sustainability to improve its social and environmental conditions.

The sustainable development plan of the Southwest Trifinio includes five priority goals to improve production conditions and socio-environmental conditions in the territory, as well as to counteract threats to it. Each goal includes a specific impact projected for the year 2025, as well as several specific actions to achieve them (LandScale, 2021 Action Plan Trifino Sur Occidente).

The plan also defined interventions within the territory derived from the main causes of the problems identified in the landscape, in order to contribute to the achievement of the proposed goals. These were called “strategic interventions”. Each of them includes a set of actions, as well as the responsible and co-responsible actors that could cooperate with each other to carry them out.

There are five strategic interventions and they cover a series of activities along the following lines:

1. Interinstitutional and intersectoral coordination;
2. Access to incentives for small forestry and micro-producers in the landscape;
3. Increased knowledge of the population and producers about sustainability and the process to achieve it;
4. Establishment of compensation schemes for environmental services; and
5. Improvement of basic health services and drinking water in the most vulnerable population.



POSITIVE IMPACTS OF IMPLEMENTING THE LANDSCALE PILOT PROJECT IN GUATEMALA

Implementing the LandScale pilot started from understanding how other sites outside the production areas are affected and vice versa. It was about leaving the farm and the plot to see the interconnections between spaces and ecosystems at a landscape scale. This shows that the landscape scale was considered of utmost importance for different actors and reflects the intertwined condition of the landscape components. As one actor reveals:

“The question was how much these activities were influencing a landscape to be sustainable or not?”

Rafael Rodríguez Rainforest Alliance

At the municipal level, the implementation of the LandScale pilot has made it possible to strengthen the environmental dimension in the actions carried out by the municipal council. In the specific case of Champerico, progress has been made in the construction of municipal nurseries supported by landscape partners. The voice of an actor shows us the interest in participating in the pilot:

“And they raised us, they made us know what the project was about, and the truth is, we as a municipality are interested, since we are a municipality that does need to strengthen our municipal environment”

Andrés Mencho Municipalidad de Champerico.



FIGURE 6. Nursery generated by LandScale partners.

One of the most important impacts, highlighted by all the actors, is the strengthening of inter-institutional relations. Although there was good communication between some actors or institutions, there was a lack of knowledge about the actions carried out by each one in the landscape. This good communication, which is reflected in the Sustainable Development Plan, is also materialized in different actions in which each partner incorporates something to collaborate to carry it out. As one partner mentions:

“And yes, there have been more direct collaborations, that is: look, let’s agree and do something. It’s okay. - And it has not been seen as: it is that he is getting into my field.- Rather, expressions such as: Look, there is an area that needs attention, and a company has said that they could contribute this.- Then the community members say: oh well, if they put that, then we will gladly help. - So that has been seen, that as collaboration, and this dialogue is already much more enjoyable and seeking the objectives of the action plan”.

José Luis López Solidaridad

Another impact of implementing the LandScale pilot project is that it brought with it key resources to initiate concrete actions in the landscape that could serve as pilot models for local actors to replicate such as reforestation, training, establishment of agroforestry systems, among others. This caused other actors with more resources to redirect some of these to activities that had been agreed upon in the framework of the pilot project. In the words of the community and a government partner:

“We are now more established; it is a big project” Catalino Tun y Leonardo Barrios
Comunidad 31 de Julio

“That they have injected resources for restoration efforts, reforestation. A fairly strong effort has been made in community work through forest nurseries, establishing agroforestry systems, training. Yes, there has been a strong injection of resources for training issues, both technical training and awareness”

Luis Vela INAB Regional.



FIGURE 7. Candelilla mangrove for reforestation.

Specifically, the increase in nurseries for reforestation and restoration also implies training and tools that, thanks to the LandScale pilot project, and, in the midst of a health emergency, constituted key material and symbolic capital to achieve municipal objectives, but at the same time, the pilot landscape.

“Last year, when LandScale arrived with us, we increased from 1 to 7 nurseries at the municipal level”

Andrés Mencho Municipalidad Champerico

Another key aspect is that the pilot landscape partners saw their efforts become visible to actors they did not know or who were competitors in the territory. This has repercussions on building trust and empowering the partners with the pilot project. Knowing

that certain actions carried out by them were viewed favorably by other actors is symbolic capital that facilitates communication and interaction. Likewise, knowing that the evaluation was carried out towards everyone and in an equitable manner, made them see in which situations they were fine and in which they were not. To say of a partner:

“The evaluation made us nervous, because it was something uncertain. But already with the results, we realized something that we already knew and that perhaps we did not want to see. Well, certain things had to be improved. But it also allows you, when you have this tool, to know that everyone was evaluated in the same way”

Gustavo Chacón Grupo HAME



FIGURE 8. Sample of agroforestry systems to LandScale partners.

In summary, the benefits can be felt in three situations as indicated by a landscape partner:

“A) institutional point of view: coordinate and unite efforts that we had individually; B) biodiversity point of view: complete our programs with this perspective; C) social management point of view:

*expand our programs aligned to another environmental nature (seedling nursery to plant mangrove, with the project they were provided with many things of implementation and resources)”.
Jorge Moreno Ingenio Magdalena*

Finally, and as an admirable situation, one of the benefits with the greatest impact of the LandScale Guatemala pilot project at a social level has to do with raising awareness among the men of the 31 de Julio Community regarding women and gender. In this regard, a community leader comments:

“For example, what I do see is great progress, this one that we are already changing a little, is machismo. Because [in] the beginning [they said] that only men should go because women do not advance, women do not work...”

Carmen Gómez Comunidad 31 de Julio

This change is very significant because the issue of gender equity is being recognized in many schemes and frameworks on the environment at a planetary level. The women of the 31 de Julio Community have been able to visualize their potential as co-partici-

pants in the management of their ecological systems compared to men. The result is more empowered women, more sensitive men, and a community that has moved closer to futures with greater gender equality. The words of the community regarding the reforestation and maintenance of the mangrove resonate strongly:

“But that we are going, we are going, then that is progress because they were able to realize today how many of us women we were working. And now they can’t complain that we do less because they give us our homework and we turn it in. We are showing them that we also have the right, we have opportunities, and we can do the same as them. I mean, we’re all the same”.

Carmen Gómez y Yadira Aguilar
Comunidad 31 de Julio



FIGURE 9. Group of women from the 31 de Julio in reforestation maintenance.

CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES OF LANDSCALE IN GUATEMALA

CHALLENGES OF THE PILOT PROJECT

The pilot project in our country thus faces some challenges identified by the actors. One of the main ones is the possibility of incorporating other actors who live and work in the landscape but who, for various reasons, have not been addressed by the group of partners of the LandScale pilot, taking into account existing platforms, like roundtables or comities for water or ecosystem protection. This may be due to the strategy of approaching partner by partner.

Having a diversity of actors would give the pilot project a more plural character and could incorporate other visions and different ways of solving problems. Some key partners are the other municipalities in the landscape (Ócos and La Blanca), which should join as recognized by the Municipality of Champerico. In turn, ranchers and hydroelectric plants should be incorporated. Being a landscape known for having small producers, they should be incorporated into the LandScale pilot project, since there is now the possibility of doing so, given that the development plan contains several common dreams. As approached by a partner:

“I think that some actors are missing, for me the small producer has to be included, right? Let’s say, there is a sector there that is not yet included”
 José Luis López *Solidaridad*

The actors of the pilot project mention that the internalization of the strategic plan is required and that it be adopted in the different annual operational plans of the partners. The ultimate goal is that everyone embraces the vision of the strategy and the importance of the LandScale tool, that they see its benefits and that the goals defined by all the partners are achieved.

Another challenge for the LandScale Guatemala pilot is the self-sufficiency of the project and the continuity of actions in order to meet the expectations generated in the strategic development plan. It is true that the issue of trust, willingness and inter-institutional collaboration is bearing much fruit, but it is necessary to think about what other situations could be effective in attracting funds to the planned activities. In this regard from RA they observe:

“Restoration is a topic so connected to different aspects that I think it aligns quite well with LandScale and that can be like a bridge while other funds are still being sought to continue improving governance and the landscape action plan in the future, until reaching to the point of self-sufficiency”
 Sarah Lupberger *Rainforest Alliance*

CHALLENGES FOR LANDSCALE IN GUATEMALA

There is a consensus that one of the main challenges is the political governance of the country, mainly in relation to the formation of local power through the municipalities. This is so because from time to time, both the mayor and the municipal council can change, positively or negatively affecting the development of LandScale initiatives.

These normal and continuous political changes are not avoidable and rather are the trigger for adaptation in such a way that any action framed within a project that uses LandScale continues to develop without setbacks. One solution to this is the empowerment of partners with projects. In the case of the LandScale Guatemala pilot, that they make the project their own by positively assessing the possibilities that open up for their companies, institutions or communities.

As one actor mentions:

“Because a political change...is a challenge. How are we going to deal with that? Logically I think that by having more partners empowered”.

Rafael Rodríguez Rainforest Alliance



FIGURE 10. Partners of the LandScale in the pilot landscape.

A second challenge of implementing another project using the LandScale tool in Guatemala is to move towards a preparation phase that can explain in detail the landscape approach to the actors and future partners. This requires building trust and governance, so taking the necessary time and activities that strengthen these conditions should be considered a priority in planning. In this same preparation phase, having clear rules and knowing which partners will carry out certain activities becomes a key point for the rest of the process to progress smoothly.

Finally, and as was observed during the development of the evaluation of the LandScale Guatemala pilot, the data in Guatemala are scattered, do not exist, or are not taken at the scale at which the LandScale tool works. There are large information gaps in different areas, as well as limitations in the scale of the data.

As an early RA actor mentions:

[data] Dispersion first. The other thing is that not all the data can be found at the community level, and basically it only reached the municipal level, although it worked for us, but many stayed at the department level. So, one had to extrapolate data, but this was not very reliable.

Sergio Dionisio Rainforest Alliance

Solving this challenge starts from understanding the indicators from other angles and using other variables to estimate them, as was done in the evaluation of the LandScale pilot in Guatemala. By 2026 there may be better data, the creation of an independent database would be a good step forward for the pilot project partners in Guatemala, for which a tool was developed to facilitate the monitoring of the actions implemented by each of the partners.

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES



FIGURE 11: Youth from the 31 de Julio community in reforestation activities.

There are shared visions regarding the possibilities that the LandScale pilot project opens up for landscape partners. The first is that the results of the pilot must be communicated to other communities so that they can see the benefits of the tool, the process and organization, as well as the partners involved; link these with current mechanisms such as INAB's forestry incentives and with ecological restoration policies.

"I believe that replicating or informing our communities because we really have several communities that have mangrove areas, so our duty is to inform the communities, which is what we are doing. And if it is possible to replicate, right, let's work in this way, I think it is a tool, a method that

we could go, perhaps, we municipally make the replicas to the communities"

Andrés Mencho *Municipalidad de Champerico*

In another direction, the partners envision that the LandScale Guatemala pilot project and its results could be aligned with public policies and linked to new financial mechanisms that ensure a constant flow of resources, to meet the goals proposed in the development plan. The possibility of attracting investments to the landscape with funds from various sources and investing at the community level to continue generating positive impacts was also discussed.

An important idea that some partners retained is the possibility of starting another evaluation using LandScale in other landscapes in Guatemala. Some areas

that were initially mentioned or considered could be potential territories to implement other LandScale processes. In this sense, an actor mentioned the following:

“Even we proposed that it be in Sayaxché, a border area where it is being developed now, aha. Precisely for having that concept of landscape. That from the natural point of view.” Gustavo Chacón *Grupo HAME*

Something pending that generates expectations is the possibility of improving the market conditions of the products generated in a landscape evaluated according to the LandScale indicators. It is important to be able to reach buyers and for them to see that the products they are going to acquire come from territories focused on maintaining the sustainability of the landscape. As mentioned by an actor who was part of the start of the LandScale pilot in Guatemala:

“¿And what about the buyers, as I was saying, many things are pushed by the market. Let’s say the buyer can say, I want to continue buying, but I also want LandScale. So... it helps, right? The buyer part is missing for me...” Sergio Dionisio *Rainforest Alliance*

Due to the fact that the tool was implemented on a pilot basis, it generated important information and cooperation schemes between the actors of the landscape, so it is still expected that the process can generate changes in terms of sustainability and that the tool allows demonstrating the effort of jointly, which should generate changes in local and international investments and in a market committed to sustainability. Finally, land use planning is a bet that some partners mention as a possibility of achieving impact using the LandScale tool to assess landscapes, but its multidimensionality allows it to also be used in different frameworks. In the words of the INAB:

“The spirit of the tool can be applied to many ecosystems, to many processes, not precisely the forestry approach, but within the water approach, solid waste management approach, liquid waste, etc. To give an example, the same issue of land use planning that we need so much and urgently needs in the country”

Luis Vela *INAB regional*

LESSONS LEARNED

The implementation of the LandScale tool in Guatemala, in the pilot project, leaves us with several lessons learned, the result of the various enabling conditions and the work of the partners:

- Having a previous platform or base of work for a landscape lead or convener to build on is of the utmost importance so as not to start from scratch but rather build on existing relationships and achievements.
- The strategy of approaching partners is essential. In the case of the LandScale Guatemala pilot project, choosing the partners very selectively and contacting them step by step based on their interests allowed us to build trust to participate in the process.
- The presence of a conservation element is essential to unite the concrete efforts of all the partners. This allows the actions of each partner to be oriented around this element of conservation.
- Exploring other metrics for the LandScale tool indicators suggests adaptability in partners and creativity to see beyond existing data. This promotes the search for new ways to measure and understand the indicators in the proposed landscape.
- Good management and communication from the beginning of the implementation of an LandScale project allows to avoid misunderstandings and facilitate progress towards the proposed objectives.
- Using the LandScale tool makes visible the actions at the individual level of each partner and at the same time allows the integration of different but complementary agendas.
- Elaborate a territorial development plan based on the LandScale tool guided the partners to find coincidences in the medium-term goals to improve the sustainability of the landscape in the four pillars.



FIGURE 12: Multi-stakeholder effort in mangrove restoration.

FINAL COMMENTS

The agro-export industry of the South Coast of Guatemala has been and is an essential part of the national economy. It is the basis of livelihood for thousands of people and the productive dynamics of the region have inevitably led to processes of ecological degradation. This is the case of the Trifinio Suroccidente landscape, which is also characterized by a weak presence of the State for the preservation of natural resources. In this context, the LandScale tool is incorporated as an alternative management instrument, with a series of criteria and indicators that allow all interested parties to get involved in the sustainable management of the landscape, in order to protect the future of the mangrove and the entire territory, considerably improve the subsistence of farmers and users of natural wealth and ensure long-term resources to the private sector.

The LandScale pilot project in Guatemala has been going through various setbacks since its inception, and yet, given the nature of its approach and principles, it allowed the original actors and those that were added to find creative and innovative ways to maintain communication, to work collectively, to give their individual opinions and to specify the 2021-2026 territorial development plan.

The various actors express satisfaction with what has been achieved to date, and because they have been empowered by the project, they hope to be able to achieve the shared dreams of the plan in social, environmental, and productive terms. There are

challenges around governance and obtaining mechanisms to self-finance the plan, but they have in their favor an alliance with common and clear goals, actors willing to collaborate and LandScale as a tool that will rigorously evaluate the progress or setbacks made. In short, the LandScale tool used in the pilot project strengthened the spaces for agreement, allowing various problems to be faced to finally establish common goals and articulate strategies in the 2021-2026 territorial development plan.

From the LandScale pilot in Guatemala, it can be highlighted that:

“in the work we are doing, highlight the fact that we must all take care of nature. And that we can all do it no matter if we are men, women, or children, because we all can. And everyone, if we all get together with the purpose of caring for nature and the environment, it would be excellent. That would be what I would like people to see at some point, somewhere: that men, women, children, young people, we can all contribute to improving nature and the environment” Carmen Gómez y Yadira Aguilar de la Comunidad 31 de Julio

“We hope to move forward, because we are training ourselves to be a community with a good future ahead” Catalino Tun y Leonardo Barrios, de la Comunidad 31 de Julio

Solidaridad

CHANGE **THAT MATTERS**



LANDSCALE



RAINFOREST ALLIANCE

Contacts:

JOSÉ LUIS LÓPEZ

PALM OIL PROGRAM MANAGER

CENTRAL AMERICA, MEXICO & CARIBBEAN REGION

TELEPHONE +502 2366-6565

EMAIL joseluis@solidaridadnetwork.org

WEB www.solidaridadnetwork.org

MARIO RAFAEL RODRÍGUEZ

SENIOR ASSOCIATE, LANDSCALE

RAINFOREST ALLIANCE

TELEPHONE +502 2300-6802

EMAIL mrodriguez@ra.org

WEB www.rainforest-alliance.org