

## Seattle International Foundation Launches Design Phase for New Platform to Achieve Collective Impact in Central America

At this year's Central America Donors Forum, the Seattle International Foundation (SIF) announced "Central America 2030," a new platform for collective action in Central America. The effort brings together committed businesses, governments, civil society, and philanthropists to chart the course on a common, regional agenda. The platform will align regional priorities and goals, enable better coordination of development efforts, and strengthen work to improve the lives of the most marginalized in Central America.

Over the last 15 years, SIF and our partners have witnessed notable progress in Central America. GDP per capita is on the rise and overall poverty levels are decreasing. Guatemala enacted a child marriage law raising the legal age of marriage to 18. The region also achieved notable private sector successes, such as inter-country electricity integration, benefiting both individuals and businesses. Nevertheless, the advances in Central America do not alleviate the significant burdens of the most vulnerable populations. Lack of education and healthcare, and social inequality and poverty remain the status quo for many.

With the exception of Costa Rica, all countries in Central America fall below the world average on the Corruption Perceptions Index, indicating a high incidence of instability across the region. In 2015, El Salvador had a homicide rate of more than 20 times the world average. Physical, emotional, and economic insecurity in the Northern Triangle has led to mass migration to Mexico and to the United States.

Indicative of the lack of outside support seeking to address Central American problems is the fact that in 2015, Central America received about \$1.6 billion<sup>1</sup> in official development assistance (ODA), the majority of which went to only two of the seven countries in the region (Honduras and Nicaragua).

Comparatively, Kenya, which has a similar population to all of Central America, received \$2.5 billion. The region also receives little private philanthropy. Central America received only 1.1% – or \$68M<sup>2</sup> – from U.S. foundations in 2013.

SIF has found that there is an absence of a platform to drive collective impact across Central America, and many of our partners have confirmed the need for a common agenda – one that is shaped by all voices. We recognize that there are existing alliances and networks addressing targeted issues. Creating a platform to stitch together all of those networks will, we believe, amplify the impact of these

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<sup>1</sup> Tableau analysis from OECD.

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Foundation Funding for Central America in Context. Foundation Center. [https://cadonorsforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/FC-SIF\\_1pager\\_FINAL\\_ENG.pdf](https://cadonorsforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/FC-SIF_1pager_FINAL_ENG.pdf)

organizations. “We invite the community to unite and identify the major breakthroughs needed to end poverty in Central America by 2030. This is an opportunity to work together to seek important solutions for the sizeable problems which face communities throughout Central America,” said SIF co-founder, Bill Clapp, at the close of the 2017 Central America Donors Forum.

The platform will focus on advocacy and policy work to build the investment case for Central America at the local, regional, and global level; and support and build on the work of organizations already fighting for a policy environment conducive to economic and social progress. Using existing indices – and new measures as needed – we will define a common set of indicators to monitor progress and ensure mechanisms are in place for collecting, analyzing, and using data across the platform to make key decisions and to achieve alignment among the participants. Our future hope is to incorporate technical assistance to enable operating organizations, local governments, and other interested parties to build the necessary infrastructure to manage and sustain programs. Through events, such as the annual Central America Donors Forum, “Central America 2030” will convene participants seeking progress toward a common agenda.

We believe that focusing on a consistent set of priorities, indicators, and populations in order to align goals and resources will produce positive change in the region.

Despite efforts across sectors, the challenges and opportunities facing Central America are too great and too complex to be addressed by individual organizations operating in silos. It is our belief and hope that “Central America 2030” will provide the vehicle needed to chart a new course for the region. By next year’s Forum, we have three objectives for Central America 2030: a structure in place, consensus around the priorities for the region, and a path forward to change its trajectory – in a big way – by 2030.

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