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GUATEMALA

SUCCESS STORY

Concepción Tutuapa Leverages Donor Funds to Plan for its Future

USAID supports local initiatives to invest in people and meet basic needs.



Foto: Justo Toj, asesor municipal PDGL.

Located in the highlands of San Marcos Department, the Municipality of Concepción Tutuapa has 49,363 residents, with an indigenous population of 98%. It is also one of the poorest municipalities in the Department of San Marco: 92% of the population lives in poverty, of which 51% live in extreme poverty.

After the devastation of Hurricane Stan, the Office of Municipal Planning (OMP) in Concepción Tutuapa began working to promote a plan for social and economic development with support from PDGL.

Effective planning and citizen participation are necessary to achieve social and economic development in any municipality. Unfortunately it sometimes takes a disaster to recognize the need for change. In the aftermath of Hurricane Stan, the Municipal Council in Concepción Tutuapa approved the creation and staffing of an Office of Municipal Planning (OMP) on October 10, 2006.

Previously, development planning was relegated to a secondary task. Municipal workers recall that their daily activities consisted of issuing identity cards, birth certificates and death certificates, and collecting taxes: "In reality, we didn't have the time to plan." The result was that the municipality had in place little capacity to implement reconstruction projects, even when funding was available.

As part of its Hurricane Stan program, USAID's Decentralization and Local Governance Program (PDGL) is helping the municipality of Concepción Tutuapa's OMP take important steps to strengthen its planning and project execution capabilities. As a result of PDGL assistance, municipal personnel now have the time and capabilities to develop solutions to current problems while also planning for future social and economic development.

Since January 2007, PDGL has helped Concepción Tutuapa's OMP to make advancements in many areas. These include decentralizing of the management of Hurricane Stan reconstruction projects in conjunction with effective monitoring and accountability tools, strengthening community participation, and promoting the creation of the Municipal Development Council (COMUDE).

PDGL is providing financial and technical support to the OMP as a part of its work in 16 municipalities in the Department of San Marcos municipalities. The Program is assisting in the creation of a transparent system of public resource administration that delegates responsibilities and resources to municipalities, and increases opportunities for citizen participation. In addition, PDGL has introduced a risk reduction plan into the reconstruction activities in San Marcos in order to mitigate the social and economic effects of future natural disasters.