



DESTINATION ATITLÁN The Ecological Coffee Route

Uniterra is a Canadian volunteer cooperation and international development program that is jointly operated by WUSC (World University Service of Canada) and CECI (the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation). The program supports inclusive economic development to benefit women and youth in 14 countries across Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Uniterra works with key private, public, and civil society partners to facilitate growth and change in markets that have the greatest impact on the marginalized.

Coffee Culture

For many people, drinking a good cup of coffee in the morning is a must, but how many know that Guatemala's small coffee producers receive only a meagre share of their coffee cup for their hard work? Thanks to the vision and tenacity of a volunteer and the Uniterra Program, several small producer cooperatives from Lake Atitlán and the relevant municipal and national authorities got together to develop an Ecological Coffee Route which would create new jobs, increase revenues and improve the living conditions of the people around the lake.

A Coffee, but at What Price?

The price of coffee has been decreasing steadily in the last 10 years, directly affecting small producers and contributing to an increase in migration. To survive, coffee producers seek to diversify their income while drawing on some of the unique assets of coffee producing regions. In the last few years, agricultural tourism has been providing opportunities for visitors to learn about local cultures and global food networks while supporting those at the base of the food system. The Atitlán Ecological Coffee Route is a tourist circuit of coffee plantations around Lake Atitlán. This project, led initially by six cooperatives, three government bodies, and one private enterprise, stems from the repeated demands by cooperatives and the determination of a Uniterra volunteer acting as Project Management Advisor for the Cooperative La Voz. In 2016, Yamil Vallecillo met with the Authority in Charge of the Sustainable Management of Lake Atitlán's Basin and its Environment (AMSCLAE) to examine the possibility of offering integrated services to interested cooperatives.

Country

Guatemala

Program

2015-2020 Uniterra Volunteer Program

Date

2017-2018

Implementing Partners

Cooperatives La Voz, Coatitlán, COINATT, San Miguel, FEDMAP, Asociación Café Juan Ana, INGUAT, ANACAFÉ, AMSCLAE

Author and Contact Information

Caroline Roger,
Documentation Officer,
Uniterra Program

Key Themes of the Story

Coffee, small producers, multiple stakeholders, agrotourism



Festival de café Atitlán 2018 poster

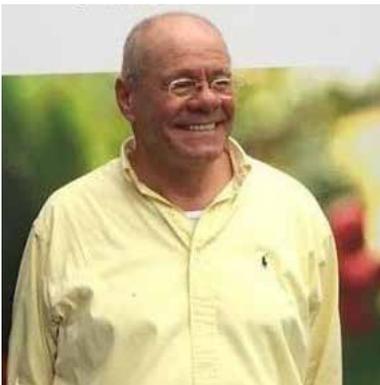
Expected Results

841 direct beneficiaries
(cooperative members)

2,523 indirect beneficiaries
(cooperative members and their family)

1 volunteer involved

Posters, brochures, logos, advertising, etc.



Volunteer **Yamil Vallejo**, Project Management Advisor, played an essential role in the creation of the Coffee Route. It took him over a year and many meetings with the various Mayan communities of Lake Atitlán to create and maintain links between all the stakeholders of the projects and thereby ensure the Coffee Route's success.

The Ecological Coffee Route of the Atitlán Destination

To succeed, it was essential to sit all the stakeholders at the same table and ensure that each found its interest. Apart from the cooperatives, there was:

- The Authority in Charge of the Sustainable Management of Lake Atitlán's Basin and its Environment (AMSCLAE), which manages social programs including awareness-raising activities, as well as protection and management linked to the lake.
- The Guatemalan Institute of Tourism (INGUAT), the government body for tourism development.
- The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock Breeding, responsible for soil management.
- The National Association of Coffee (ANACAFÉ), a private enterprise that governs all the production exportations of the country's coffee.
- The Uniterra Program, supporting the coffee subsector's cooperatives.

In 2017, after a year of discussions, a Technical Committee composed of two people from each organisation was created and a Coffee Cooperative Network set up. One of their first tasks was to promote local coffee consumption through tasting centres and promotional events. The overall Route is very long, but each municipality has its own distinct circuit which includes information on coffee culture, processing, preparation and tasting, in a delightful decor at the heart of the Mayan world. An interpretation center and its adjacent coffee shop to taste the different types of coffee produced by all the cooperatives are also planned.

The Coffee Route is thus a series of various initiatives seeking to gather communities around their main activity, the production of coffee, twinned with tourism activities. Not only does it stimulate the local and national consumption as well as the economic development of the Atitlán Lake basin, the Coffee Route hopes to become an emblem of the Atitlán Destination.

Results

- The main strength of the project resides in putting together all the sector actors who previously did not communicate much together. The volunteer played a key facilitating role, encouraging competitors to work together. Each stakeholder has its place, strengths and weaknesses, but all can gain from promoting the region, its tourism attractions and products.
- The project also generated non traditional jobs for youth (especially for women) such as tour guides for the plantation circuit, roasting specialists and baristas, avoiding further migration to the cities.
- At the same time, organisational development and capacity-building work is ongoing. Most small producers have other sources of income besides coffee, such as beekeeping or fruit and vegetable production. The Cooperative La Voz, supported by the Uniterra Program, has taken the leadership to train youth and women members of the associated cooperatives in entrepreneurship, so that they can fully participate in the diversification of income generating activities.

Scaling up, Reproduction, Sustainability and Innovation

The official launch of the Ecological Coffee Route took place December 1st, 2018, and was followed by the 2nd Coffee Festival in the main town of Panajachel. Five other small producer cooperatives are preparing to integrate the Ecological Coffee Route. All the members of the Coffee Route have committed themselves to take into account the environmental sustainability in all their activities.

This project contributes to the Sustainable Development Objectives: 1 – No poverty; 5 – Gender equality; 8 – Decent work and economic growth; 10 – Reduced inequalities; 12 – Responsible consumption and production; 17 – Partnerships for the goals.