

A disaster can erase a small village or town from the map. It takes more than immediate relief to ensure a community's future. It requires time and money to rebuild and ensure a future. In Ecuador's Esmeraldas Province the 7.8 magnitude quake in April destroyed 20 houses, severely damaged 20 more, and left another 20 dwellings needing repair to make inhabitable again. This rural community of 1,500 people risk being uprooted and displaced.

Boulder-based Cholaca, producers of pure liquid cacao sourced from cacao beans harvested by the indigenous farmers of northwestern Ecuador, are partnering with the Resilience Foundation, a 501c3 nonprofit (EIN 46-2608660), created by Terra Genesis International, a nongovernmental organization. Funds raised will finance rebuilding efforts and will provide basic supplies, all of which are crucial to the future of this rural community and of the chocolate production for companies around the world sourcing cacao from Ecuador such as Cholaca.

The Story of Canalon

In Southern Esmeraldas sits Canalon, a small cacao producing village that that is a mere 10 km from the quake's epicenter. The earthquake's devastation and damage to this community was immense. Although many homes remain standing, much of the damage is unrepairable as they have sustained structural cracks – they are unsuitable for habitation and must be demolished. The villagers are carrying on with daily life despite the constant aftershocks that shake the homes left standing making them less stable.

The UOPROCAE farmers' cooperative sees this as an opportunity to rebuild villages together, and create something more beautiful, functional and earthquake resistant.



The Story of Olkin Olivero



Olkin Olivero, his wife and four children, and neighbors survived the April 9 earthquake that killed 654 people. His house did not; it is uninhabitable. Because it is built of wood it stood, but is falling down as aftershocks continue to rock the area. Work is already underway to demolish the unsafe structure, even though they lack funds to buy some needed materials they cannot get locally on their own.

Olkin is a member one of the cooperatives that makes up UOPROCAE.

He and his family feel blessed and thankful to be alive, but are anxious for the future. The disaster is the latest in an ongoing struggle to protect their land and way of life.

"In the spirit of mutual aid we are grateful for Cholaca to come here to help our communities rebuild, so we can continue doing what we love: stewarding the rainforest to produce this fine flavor cacao for the enjoyment of people who care about the world they live in." ~ Olkin Olivero

Temporary Housing

During renovation and rebuilding efforts many villagers are residing in temporary tent houses built from rubble. Most families have an average annual income of about \$2,500 from their cacao farms. The cost to rebuild a simple home is around \$5,000-\$7,000. An earthquake-safe home costs \$7,000-\$10,000, the amount of money made by farming families in four years.



Why it Matters to Cholaca

Cholaca's suppliers belong to two local farming co-operatives, Eco-Cacao and UOPROCAE, which distribute profits among their members. The earthquake displaced more than 30 families in the cooperatives to the tent camps. Cholaca, in addition to paying above fair trade prices for cacao coming from these communities, is working to raise funds to support the rebuilding effort. Cholaca believes that the community's hard work gives rise to the good things in life, like chocolate. In addition to investing in the community's ability to grow cacao and even make chocolate, it is determined to help rebuild the homes of those affected by the earthquake.

"Before I've talked about preserving the rainforest. It's really about saving people's way of life," said Ira Leibtag, CEO of Cholaca. Cholaca's indigenous partners produce some of the [finest cacao in the world](#) in the world through regenerative agriculture practices. They are growing a sustainable economy while preserving the rainforest where they live. Cacao grows beneath the natural canopy alongside bananas and other crops. Deforestation and unsustainable farming threaten the world's chocolate supply and chocolate production for companies like Cholaca.

How to Support

Individuals and groups can donate online through genorosity.com at <https://igg.me/at/zm-ohzatNis>.

Prospective donors can take a visual tour of the community and sustainable development by viewing Cholaca's video: ["Preventing Deforestation from Chocolate"](#).